

Dale Pendell: **Salvia divinorum**, from [*Pharmako/Poeia: Plant Powers, Poisons, and Herbcraft*](#) Mercury House, San Francisco, 1995.

Salvia divinorum

Common names:

Diviner's sage, ska Pastora, hojas de la Pastora, seer's sage, la Maria.

The "Just This" Plant. The "Emptiness" plant.

Related species:

Salvia divinorum contains a diterpene, salvinorin. Some *Coleus* species are rumored to contain similar compounds, but this is still unconfirmed (bioassay reports are mostly negative).

Salvia splendens contains salviarin and splendidin, both diterpenes, and we should expect more from other species. No psychotropic activity has been reported for those but that does not close the case--I heard background whispers of "placebo effect" for years when talking about the powers of dried *ska Pastora* leaves!

Salvia sonomensis contains a camphorlike substance that is a mild stimulant when smoked. *Salvia officinalis* contains thujone, constituting in some varieties over fifty percent of the essential oil.

But those plants don't really have anything to do with me.

True.

Taxonomy:

A true sage, like cooking sage. Mint family. There are a thousand species in the genus, and five hundred species in the Neotropical subgenus *Calosphace*, to which *Salvia divinorum* belongs. Many temperate *Salvia* spp. are adapted to xeric conditions, such as the black sage (*Salvia mellifera*), white sage (*Salvia apiana*) and purple sage (*Salvia leucophylla*) of the California chaparral. *Salvia divinorum* is a hydrophyte.

The Plant:

Square-stemmed, winged margins, the stems hollow and succulent. The stems will grow to over eight feet if supported. Commonly they fall over, rooting where they fall. Axillary branches easily sprout from the nodes. The plant flowers when the days shorten: long graceful racemes of fragrant white flowers, the calyces deep lavender. I sprinkle the flowers into salads.

The Ally:

She can be shy. Sometimes she has to get to know you for a while, before she will come out and say hello. But once she appears, are there any who are more direct?

Part Used:

The leaves. The stems can be juiced.

How Taken: The Path of Leaves:

Thirteen pair of leaves, the stems all facing the same direction, are rolled into a cigar and eaten. That is the traditional way, the way of the Keepers of the Plant, the Mazatecs. The leaves are used the same way mushrooms are used, with candles (which are later put out), prayers, and singing. The ceremony is performed at night, in a darkened room. The darker the better. And the quieter the better: both light and noise have a way of dissipating the experience.

It is not uncommon for the Mazatecs to wash the leaves down with a swig of tequila. The tequila cleanses the palate and may aid in the final absorption.

*It lights up the mouth like a rainbow,
it's like a pastel sunrise breaking in the east.*

There are strict taboos to keep for several days after eating the sacred leaves, such as not having any sexual contacts. It is also important to be ritually mindful when collecting the leaves, and also in cleaning up after the ceremony.

Chemistry:

Unknown until recently, and still far from understood. In 1982, Alfredo Ortega and his associates isolated a bicyclic diterpene, $C_{23}H_{28}O_8$, from material gathered in Oaxaca and named it *salvinorin*. Another group, led by Leander Valdes at the University of Michigan, independently isolated the same compound and named it *divinorum*. Because Ortega published first, the name *salvinorin* has precedence. Neither author tested salvinorin for human activity, but recent tests by Daniel Siebert and others, myself included, have proved the psychoactivity of salvinorin beyond further doubt.

Other compounds in the fresh leaves may act synergistically in creating the extraordinary and variable effects of this plant, perhaps by inhibiting the lytic action of an enzyme or of the digestive juices.

The Plant:

*seer's sage
truth sage
dream sage
ghost sage
lizard sage
mouse sage
soft-footed sage
cymbals sage
roller coaster sage
rocket sage
wake-up sage
it's-like-a-dance sage
silver fox sage
bare light bulb sage
waterfall sage*

Effects:

It's like a mirror with no frame: some don't see it at all; some do, but don't like what they see.

It's like cat paws, soft cat paws pressing, or like a bunch of bird tongues lapping the mind. Or like tiny fingers, the way ivy fingers reach out to climb a wall . . .

Some say it is a sensual and a tactile thing. Some say it's about temporality and dimensionality--that it's about time travel. Some say it's about the Root Energy Network, or that it is about becoming a plant.

"Bird tongues lapping the mind." We timed them: they hit four or five times per second. It may be the theta rhythm.

How Taken: The Bridge of Smoke:

The dried leaves may be smoked. A large-bowled pipe, like a tobacco pipe, is about right. Rolled

cigarettes are less satisfactory, because it is difficult to get a deep lungful of the smoke. Hold the smoke in. One to three lungfuls are enough.

Five or six small tokes do not produce the same effect as one large inhalation. The reasons for this are not clear. Perhaps the brain responds to salvinorin within seconds, with neurochemical defenses.

The best technique is to use the Val Salva maneuver, beginning by emptying the lungs of air and then layering the smoke until the lungs are completely full. Then hold the smoke in as long as you can. Release gently.

The Ally: Bridge of Smoke:

Frequently people experience little effect from the leaves in their first meetings. The power of the leaves seems to slowly build toward a climax with successive ingestions. Diaz was the first to comment in print on this phenomenon. He drank the juice of the fresh leaves six times and noticed an "increased awareness of the plant's effects" each time.

Contrarily, sometimes the ally rolls over and crushes a person without warning, first visit. And a few people seem obdurately immune.

Effects: The Bridge of Smoke:

Over a period of several weeks, everything around me gradually became more intelligent.

Pharmacology:

Completely unknown. *Salvia divinorum* represents an entirely new class of entheogen. A Novascreen receptor site screening sponsored by David Nichols discovered no binding inhibition for the forty reference compounds tested, covering all major known receptors.

Salvia divinorum contains no alkaloids. In screening plants for psychoactivity, plants that do not contain alkaloids are routinely thrown away. Clearly that approach is too hasty.

Because of the quantity of material that must be ingested for diviner's sage to be fully active, it occurred to me in a light moment that any plant would be entheogenic if one ate twenty-six whole leaves at a sitting. That's a joke, but you can't really get the point until you eat diviner's sage yourself.

It is bitter, my brothers.

Effects, Physical:

Some people experience hyperthermia, a warming of the body. Nausea is rare, though by the eighth swallow of the leaves the gag reflex becomes overwhelming. Still, except for the swallowing part, almost nobody gets sick at the stomach.

The Plant:

It's faster than the mushrooms, and older.

An extremely rare cultigen, found only at a few locations in Oaxaca. There are specimens in botanical gardens, and in a few private collections, but lack of genetic diversity is a concern.

The plant is endangered by the forces of imperialistic religion, and has been for four hundred years, possibly longer.

*Her real name must not be told--
Her real name is closer to Medusa than to Mary.
"They came with crosses--
they came to drag us
from our huts, from our beds,
the soldiers that serve the priests."*

*en el nombre del Padre
en el nombre del Hijo
en el nombre de Espirito Santo*

The Ally:

Consciousness has to do with energy and light. It is really very simple. Neither animals nor people have consciousness. It is plants that have consciousness. Animals get consciousness by eating plants.

*We like to walk around sometimes, and to see new places.
We like some of those animal things, like mating.
Sometimes we get curious
to see what it is like to program computers.*

The Plant:

This plant is the great secret of our tradition.

Not secret anymore!

Few have heard of it. Fewer know what it looks like. Fewer still have ever met the sagely ally, yet the alliance forms invisible links wherever it goes, across continents and across oceans. The Ally blesses some, eludes others.

That such an ordinary looking plant, kind of succulent and without any alkaloids, can be as subtle and effective as the seer's sage is, causes one to wonder about other green plants--that perhaps there are other such, sisters to this sage, waiting for someone to give them the time and attention they deserve.

People ask, "If it's really so good, why is it so obscure, why haven't more people heard of it?" The answer partly has to do with history, and partly with intention, and perhaps partly with the intrinsic nature of the plant's effects.

First off, the plant is not at all obscure to her people. They know her and love her, or know her and don't love her (some think the plant devilish). Most of our ("our" meaning Western literate culture) current knowledge about *Ska Pastora* can be traced back to the visit of Gordon Wasson and Albert Hofmann to Maria Sabina. Most of "our" plants are also from this transmission. Several particulars of the Wasson/Hofmann/Sabina meeting account for some of the plant's recessive reputation. For one, Maria Sabina's primary ally was the mushroom: she only used the little leaves when the children were out of season. But there are other *curanderos* who prefer the leaves to the mushrooms. Don Alejandro says that taking the mushrooms too often "will make you crazy," but that the Virgin, who speaks through the leaves, is more gentle.

Second, when Hofmann returned to his laboratory at Sandoz Pharmaceuticals in Basel, he had brought some juice from the *Salvia* leaves back with him, "preserved in alcohol." When this juice was deemed by self-experiment no longer to be active, Hofmann abandoned his intention to analyze the juice for its psychoactive principle(s). Hofmann reported that the unknown active ingredient must be unstable. This belief was incorrect but tended to inhibit further research for some years. My own reports on the effectiveness of smoking the dried leaves were dismissed by a number of my colleagues.

On the matter of intention, to quote Lao Tzu: "Those who speak do not know, those who know do not speak." Most sage people would rather not have their beloved ally spotlighted, or scheduled, or even much heard of or spoken about.

*"This is the sneaky one.
We caught all the others,
but we couldn't catch
this one--
this one was too subtle.
We've been after this plant
for almost five hundred years."*

Lastly, I think that some of the plant's obscurity is intrinsic and will endure. How many really want to see? Most people are after the side effects, and in the matter of sensual side effects the little leaves are indeed a little sister to such a giant as *Cannabis*.

But just because the plant is not a party-goer, is not harmful, and is not abused anywhere in the known world does not mean that it would not be persecuted by those who rule by fear, if they knew of its existence. So in summation we will reiterate the early assessments of the plant and agree that it is a minor psychotropic of well-deserved obscurity.

Now say "mum."

Mum.

The Ally:

This plant has a sense of humor!

The Plant:

*garden green sage
bitter bitter sage
compost sage
sweet smoke sage
riverbank sage
shade-leaf sage
crenate-leafed sage
come-to-me sage
get-the-willies sage
whispering sage
get well sage
get fooled sage
candle-in-a-wind sage
nobody knows it sage*

The Ally:

It is when you are really stuck, when you really don't know what to do, when you are nearing the edge of funk and self-destruction, that the leaves are the most powerful and the most precise. And symmetrically, for one not seeking engagement, for one seeking diversion, the plant is not much fun. Outside of her sacred context, *la Pastora* has surprisingly little to offer.

It's not a spectator drug.

Indeed.

History:

It seems likely that *ska Pastora* was once much more widespread than it is today. Cultigens

generally have long histories, and *Salvia divinorum* is probably no exception. What is not clear is whether the decline of the plant began with the Spanish Conquest, or whether it was already in decline, and, if so, if the reasons were religious or political, or something else.

Gordon Wasson speculated that *Salvia divinorum* was the *pipilzintzintli*, the "Noble Prince" mentioned in Aztec codices. One problem with this identification is that *pipilzintzintli* was said to have both male and female varieties while our *ska Pastora* is, botanically speaking, perfect. The Aztecs were skilled botanists and surely knew the difference between male flowers and female flowers. But it is also possible that the reference to gender is metaphorical, relating to nonanatomical properties of the plant, rather than to dioeciousness. There are some known examples of such use of gender, so Wasson may indeed be correct. It would be extraordinary if a plant of the power and stature of *ska Pastora* were not well known to the Aztecs.

The Ally:

*Questing for the muse's spring, up some cold canyon,
stormdrain, up bloodvessels, canyonwalls of
flesh, rhythms surging in the darkness--
the home of the leaves, their nest within
the soul: even consciousness needs a soul. The plants
have consciousness, but no souls. For some of them,
that isn't enough.*

How Taken: The Path of Leaves:

Six to ten or more leaves are chewed into a bolus and kept in the cheeks. The absorption is through the buccal membranes. Siebert's experiments (Siebert 1994) with the juice of the leaves demonstrate conclusively that most, if not all, of the power of the leaves is deactivated in the stomach. In Siebert's experiments, those who swallowed the juice quickly and then rinsed out their mouths with water experienced no entheogenic effects, while the group that simply kept the juice in their mouths and never swallowed it were all affected strongly.

I still prefer chewing and swallowing, if only from a sense of tidiness and tradition. Chewing with your cheeks full keeps the material in motion and insures that all parts of the mucosa are constantly bathed with sage leaf. More than once it has seemed to us that it is the stems, those chewy, chewy stems, that finally push it all over the edge.

One intrepid researcher called *Salvia divinorum* "the best-tasting psychedelic plant he'd ever eaten." Good point.

Effects:

The effects are different, depending on how the plant is ingested, on whether you meet the ally on the Path of Leaves or by crossing the Bridge of Smoke. And also depending on whether the plant has accepted you. That's metaphorical. Or is it? What neurochemical explanation could account for a threshold that, once breached, will still be open a year later, with no exposure to the plant intervening? Besides, neurochemical explanations are also metaphorical.

*The plant is self-concentrating.
Your body is the alembic.*

Smoking the dried leaves produces immediate effect. The effect of eating fresh material, while slower to come on, is a deeper and more sustained experience, often with strikingly colored visuals. Drinking tea made from dried leaves falls somewhere in between. (Salvinorin is practicably insoluble in water. The best way to "ingest" dried leaves is to soften them with some hot water, then keep the leaves in the cheeks just as with fresh material.)

Note that while the dosage by ingestion is ten to thirty leaves, the smoking dose amounts to one or two leaves.

*It's the immediacy, the seamless immediacy . . .
sometimes it's like it doesn't do much
of anything at all, but how many plants
do nothing with such clarity!*

The Plant:

There are rumors that the seer's sage may grow wild on some of the less accessible plateaus in Oaxaca, but this is unconfirmed. Her people grow the plant beneath coffee trees, or along streams in ravines. They reportedly do not grow it next to their homes.

at night, it might envelop the house . . .

The plant is very patient.

The Ally:

She has many epiphanies. Not all of them are shy, and not all of them are "she." One person encountered the Ally as a giant (an immeasurably ancient giant wearing a belt of human skulls). The giant looked directly at this person. The giant wanted to know why he had been summoned. The giant did not want a trivial answer.

The Plant:

*checkerboard sage
paisley sage
amazing sage
calico ribbon sage
vortex sage
owl sage
shape-shifting sage
skin-walking sage
who-are-you? sage
something-is-moving sage
get serious sage
look-we-have-come-through sage
on your own sage
she's leaving home sage
metate sage*

Class:

Existentia.

Ska Pastora is not a hallucinogen. That is not to say that it does not share some of the characteristics of class *phantastica*, it does. But there are also differences. The "true" hallucinogens all act on the 5-HT2 receptors. While the receptors of diviner's sage have not been discovered, the experiential evidence points to some new receptor, or to some holographic inundation of mind. And while many hallucinogens will help one's golf game (or, as Dock Ellis proved, one's major league pitching), a certain muscular discoordination accompanies the sage inebriation.

On the *Pharmako/Poeia* mandala, I put the little leaves on the path between *phantastica* and *inebriantia*, and name it *existentia*. By *existentia*, I do not mean anything Cartesian, nor even David Bohm's separate-from-self implicate order, but mean that which precedes essence.

*It's a personal thing. Existence.
If you can just stop thinking about it.
Salvia divinorum is what you get by crossing an entheogen with an atheist.*

Effects:

It's not like being high, it's more like being practical.

Correspondences:

Activity	Domestic Affairs
Animal	Uroboros
Archetype	Fortune Teller
Art Form	Lyric Poetry
Bodily Function	Circulation
Body Part	Mouth
Buddha Realm	Prajna Bhumi
Color	Cobalt Blue
Cosmic Entity	Singularity
Crutch For	Indecision
Dimension	Fractal
Discipline	Augury
Element	World-Stuff
Form of Energy	Windmill
Form of Ignorance	Complacency
Gemstone	Tourmaline
Geometry	Topology
God	The Mother of God

The Plant:

In all of our Pharmako/Poeia, this plant is the hidden pearl. Poets, like vintners, love such surprises, and seek them out beyond their better known brothers and sisters: an unknown poet found in a faded chapbook with light in his verses, an obscure vintage the reviewers missed, dust-covered, but filled with mouthfuls of delight. The little leaves, hiding off in the mountains, have successfully avoided the front pages for four centuries.

A Taoist sage, in another range of mountains, after many years of studying the secrets of alchemy with his master, feeling fully accomplished, descended the mountain to move into the world. When evening approached, he stopped at an inn. The people at the inn marveled at the light that seemed to hover about him--a sort of magical glow. The sage was chagrined, realizing that his studies were only half completed, and returned immediately to his teacher.

To visit the *hojas de la Pastora* is to visit an oracle, and she should be approached with the same reverence.

*Caravans of gold, threading their way
from Sardis to Delphi*

Why would someone want to consult an oracle? Why would someone seek a vision? Or it's like talking to a therapist, to a counselor--the leaves are like the *kalyanamitra*, the spiritual friend. They can tell you things.

Or make you eat your words.

It is difficult to speak.

Poesis:

Recent studies by Aaron Reisfield (Reisfield 1993) demonstrate that *Salvia divinorum* is not completely self-sterile, as had been assumed: the plant can produce viable seeds, though very infrequently. Nor did Reisfield find any significant difference in the production of viable seeds from flowers pollinated from the same clone and those pollinated by plants collected from different localities. It is of course possible that there is little genetic difference between any specimens of *S. divinorum*, even those that today grow in widely separated areas in Oaxaca.

Reisfield's observations strongly suggest that *Salvia divinorum* is a hybrid. The pollen grains of *Salvia divinorum* have low viability, indicative of disharmonious parental genes. But low pollen viability is only part of the reason that *Salvia divinorum* rarely sets seed. Even with hand pollination only 2 or 3 percent of the nutlets mature. Further exacerbating the problem of reproduction, in Mexico, the plant only flowers sporadically. Flowering seems to require more sun than is optimal for vegetative growth, so it is only plants growing on the margins of its normal habitat that flower at all.

The main barrier to fertility, according to Reisfield, occurs after the pollen tube reaches the ovary. But he was unable to determine whether the infertility was due to inbreeding depression, a condition not uncommon among plants with a long history of human relationship; hybridity; or some delayed-action effect of self-incompatibility. If *Salvia divinorum* is indeed a hybrid, the parents are long lost in poisonous prehistory--Reisfield knows of no two sages that would account for the morphological features of *la Maria*.

For you, if you want *ska Pastora*, you will have to get it the same way everyone else has for the last two thousand years: from a cutting from someone who grows it.

If your shoot is already rooted, or if you live in a humid climate, you can go ahead and plant it directly. Plant it in shade or scattered light, the leaves don't tolerate a lot of direct sunlight--I've had some plants do well with almost no sun at all. If you live in the arid interior, you may have to mist the leaves regularly, or protect them with a humidifier. *Ska Pastora* loves the redwood country, where it gets fog.

The plant will thank you for some feeding. She needs water, lots, but be careful about root-rot in pots. Also, the plants wither if they get root-bound. Protect them from frost.

The Ally:

*Once you see it, you know it
Was there all the time, so why
Is it all such
a big deal? And why
do we keep forgetting?*

Correspondences:

Goddess	Isis
Grammar	Presyntactical Mammalian
Historical Age	Future/Eon
Image	Labyrinth, Hall of Mirrors
Landscape	Garden
Logical Operator	Identity
Machine	Bathyscaph
Metal	Antimony
Metaphor	Borders
Mineral	Turquoise
Musical Instrument	Bull-Roarer
Myth	Parallel Universe
Number	Complex
Occupation	Poet/Soothsayer
Out-of-Body Realm	Clairvoyance
Periodic Table Col.	Rare Earths
Phase of Matter	Nuclear Condensed
Philosopher	Anaximander
Physical Constant	Fine Structure Constant $\alpha=2\pi e^2/hc$
Planet	Moon
Poison	Terror
Proportion	Radial Symmetry
Quark	Nen, the Quantum of Time

On Divination:

I used the Bridge of Smoke, laying out the cards. I had smoked lots of times before but this was the first time it really happened. An abyss opened. History opened. The manipulation of the cards by my hands seemed to amplify the effect. The cards fell perfectly. Each one revealed the details and development of my story with a uniqueness that was hair-raising. Then I remembered how Crowley had said that you have to get to know the cards as people. The instant I thought that, the bottom dropped out of the cards, the background of each card became a hole in the table, like an open grave. Then the little figures on the cards moved a little. They shook free and started floating about an inch above the top of the table. They were all standing up and looking at me, waiting for me to ask them something.

The species is well named.

The Ally:

It's anti-escapist, the opposite of escaping. It's not likely to be popular. It can be empathogenic, but it's more telepathic than emotional. It lights up a person's soul: we hear/know what they really think, what they really want, what they really have done. It's ideal for couples work, for keeping in touch.

On The Darkness:

The ally loves the darkness. Light can interrupt and suspend even wildly cosmic and disembodied states, seamlessly returning the petitioner to the mundane. Sometimes it is necessary to turn on the lights to attend to something or someone, a child perhaps. What is amazing is how immediately the interdimensional space reasserts itself when the lights are again put out.

The essence of the Path of Leaves is just a few friends sitting around in a dark room, perhaps drinking a little beer or tequila. Some talking. Maybe some singing or chanting. To how many people does that sound like a good time?

What a joke! No wonder some people can't stop laughing.

Or maybe the darkness is to keep others from looking in.

It may always have been a cultish plant, something on the edges.

La Maria is shy. She needs the darkness to illuminate the Logos.

Or maybe the nighttime tradition is to avoid interaction with the rootless. The Ally will take you beyond the little social games that sustain the daylight. You will see the rigidity, but you may not see the importance of sometimes playing along. An uncompromising insistence on the absolute could get quickly boorish.

Besides, daytime you have a job and have work to do.

Effects:

Holographic. Even a very tiny amount of smoke can reveal the whole panorama. Dimly, to be sure, but all there, just the same.

The Ally:

There was no me, but there was no not-me.

The most "Zen" of any plant ally excepting rice.

Effects:

Staggering. Lurching. But not like drunkenness: the mind is completely clear. The effect is reminiscent of kava.

On The Logos:

The poison has entered the Word. Words become stepping stones, a floating walkway to cross the chasms between.

What we really are is a web of interconnections, the summation of all of our relationships, all the people we know and those we are still to meet. It's not that we are in the web, the web is what we are. Vowel sounds change the colors; pitch and tone alter the shape of the enclosing space; semantics create texture. Sentences become palpable things, they take visible and tactile form, flying or sinking.

But all in the mind's eye, not in the eyeball: an interactive lucid dream accessible to the will.

*I saw where thoughts come from, visually. Some were just forming--
were seething in a kind of liquid surface, some of them went on and
blossomed, became people and conversations . . .*

Poesis:

Contrary to written lore *on Salvia divinorum*, the leaves can be dried. If you grow the plant, you may only have enough leaves for fresh ingestion in the summer and fall. I cut my plants back in the wintertime--in case it freezes. I have had little success with freezing the leaves, or juicing them and freezing the juice. Maybe it would work. I just find the juice harder to use than the leaves.

But you can dry the leaves, that's the easiest thing to do. The dried leaves carry the smoking-ally.

Effects (field report: a man, inventor and painter):

"There were things you didn't tell me. It took me a while to learn how to use it. I had to find the right dose. At first I was taking too much, six or seven lungfuls. Two or three is about right.

"It's like heavy zazen, like after a very long period of sitting, the place you can get to there. It's changed my life, turned my life around. Things are really going well.

"It's very intense, I call it a reality stutter, or a reality strobing. I think that having been a test pilot, and flying in that unforgiving environment with only two feet between our wingtips, helped to prepare me for this kind of exploration.

"There is something very pagan about it. I don't think you should tell anybody about it. Sex is fantastic. It sensitizes the skin. And it makes you want to go exploring. And sleep is great, I'm sleeping much better. A. said that it relieved her menstrual cramps. And her attitude."

The Plant:

*in-control sage
smooth-moving sage
snake-skinned sage
oh-as-little-as-that sage
fooled-me sage
narrow-nosed sage
weasel-snouted sage
creeps-up-on-you sage
falls-all-over-you sage*

loves-it sage
just-grows-and-grows sage

Effects, (field report: a man, poet and writer):

"Hey, all of a sudden that stuff got strong! I used to use it for writing, but I can't do that anymore, it's too strong. But it helps me with some of my business dealings: like it told me how to talk to the producers I had to meet with the next day. I smoke it with my girlfriend. We call it 'the balancer.'"

Effects: (field report, a man, sculptor):

"I had heard that it was going to be mild, so I took a lungful and held it in, and was expecting to have to take many more to feel a mild tingle. But it just overwhelmed me. It was so intense, so immediate. I had tunnel vision, I couldn't see anything except this tunnel in front of me, like I was going to pass out. Everything enfolded. I didn't like it. It was too abrupt, too scary. I recall feeling that if someone had walked into the room I wouldn't even have been able to talk to them. It is not subtle."

Effects: (field report, a woman, painter and poet):

"I smoked it every couple of days for two months. I hate to say this about a plant, but I'm in love with it. It's remarkable. It took six or seven tries before anything happened, almost like it was laying down pathways or something."

my rootlets, my neural rootlets . . .

"Then, all of a sudden, a big whallop, and I mean big. Scary even. It's just remarkable. It is so present, so clear. My life has changed. It has shifted dramatically, and it's because of the plant."

"It is so much what it was, unequivocal. It wasn't like it was a high, it's just Mind. It's so honest! I feel like I was recruited, like I was enlisted."

heh, heh, heh, . . .

"It has to do with specificity, the differentiation of form. Every form is filled with its own luminosity of detail. And this is true emotionally also, of my own emotions. Even the days in between the days I smoked I still felt I had this direct access. It's like the feeling after a meditation retreat, the post- sesshin feeling."

"I mean maybe I'm making all of this up. Maybe it was just oregano, but I call it 'my sweetheart.'"

The Plant:

green-straw sage
comes-clean sage
one-puff sage
thin-skinned sage
gets-inside sage
falls-in-love sage
tells-you-she-loves-you sage
don't-get-antisocial sage
get-to-work-on-time sage
lizard-skinned sage
smoke-skinned sage
just-grows-and-grows sage

Effects:

It just gives you where you are. Wherever you are, that is what you get. If you are in darkness, you fly through darkness. The light and the faces you see are the faces that you always carry, the mental faces, lit by the glow of mind. If you are with your lover, the plant is an aphrodisiac.

The Ally:

With the leaves there is no place to hide. That is why it is good for finding lost objects or for identifying thieves. It is a poison that illuminates poison: use it to find dis-ease.

Correspondences:

Quantum Force	Ψ / Schrödinger Wave Equation
Realm of Pleasure	Skin
Ritual Event	Birth
Rock	Ophiolite
Season	Samhain
Sense	Sixth
Sexual Position	Scissors
Sign	Pegasus
Sin	Lust
Social Event	Exile
Tarot Key	Moon
Time of Day	Midnight
Tool	Phurbu
Virtue	Temperance
Vowel	High Back /u/

The Ally (field report, daytime):

It seemed that as long as I left the quid in my cheek it kept getting stronger. I spit it out about one-thirty. Had an amazing time typing at my computer: it was like the typewriter from the movie "Naked Lunch." M. drove me to the beach. I felt pretty much back to normal. Late in the afternoon we decided to go to a five o'clock movie. We had some time before the movie and I strolled through a used book store. A couple of poetry books were on the display shelf. Picked up Tagore. How vacuous! All those high-sounding words but no substance. He had only read about it, thought about it. It was all lies! It was so clear. The book next to it was A. E. Housman. Dense, but legitimate. It was there. He did it through clues.

Suddenly I felt completely disoriented. What a fool I was to be out in public. How did I think I could handle going to a movie? The question "How high does it get you?" is meaningless. It's nonlinear. Only the threshold was significant, and the threshold could be so subtle!

Poesis:

One of the active ingredients of *Salvia divinorum*, salvinorin, can be extracted from the leaves. Valdes and his group at the University of Michigan isolated 1.2 grams of salvinorin from 5.35 kilograms of fresh leaves, which they dried to 674 grams of milled powder. Valdes didn't report how many leaves he started with, but the leaves that I pick average 2.3 grams fresh, and dry to about 0.45 grams. That works out to between 1,450 and 2,350 leaves to yield 1,200 milligrams of salvinorin, or between 500 and 800 micrograms of salvinorin per leaf. I crumble up several leaves into my pipe, but never smoke more than a quarter or a third of the pipe, which is about one dried leaf. So, back-of-the-envelope, salvinorin is active at ranges of 500 to 800 micrograms, about twenty time more active by weight than DMT (dimethyltryptamine).

Quantitative experiments by Daniel Siebert, Jonathan Ott, myself, and others have since confirmed the arithmetic.

Effects, Salvinorin:

Many experience childhood scenes. Parents may be represented abstractly. Exceedingly fast changes of scene. Ontological revelations.

I have found one salvinorin "hardhead." Under my supervision, the man carefully and properly smoked a full milligram of salvinorin, vaporized in a glass pipe. After a few minutes he shrugged his shoulders, got up, and, trying to be polite, remarked that "maybe there were some visuals."

Poesis:

All of the information needed to isolate salvinorin is in Valdes's paper (or, another method, in Ortega's paper). While Ortega and Valdes had to isolate pure crystalline salvinorin quantitatively, simpler extractions would suffice.

But all of this raises some questions. Why do it? On the "Crystal Highway" the ally often shows a more precipitous, and more terrifying, face than she does on the Path or on the Bridge. Many who meet the ally on the Crystal Highway never wish to repeat the experience. The ally is always fast, but on the Crystal Highway she is superluminal. And controlling dosage at the microgram level requires some skill. The raw leaf seems so exquisitely balanced already.

The plant is legal; just grow it. You may learn something. It is plenty strong enough in its fresh or dried form. It is benevolent in that form. When you start dealing with molecules in micrograms, with glass pipes, with overdoses, you are up against possibly serious issues of toxicity. And the sacred leaves of the shepherdess become a commodity. And then there are the legal considerations.

My advice is to make friends with the plant. If you want to socialize, consider smoking *cannabis*; if you want to get high, try nitrous oxide or smoking DMT. Only if you are ready to walk with an ally should you attempt the Path of Leaves or cross the Bridge of Smoke. Just don't blame me if the green beings recruit you, and you become a plant disguised with legs instead of a person.

Effects, Salvinorin: The Crystal Road:

I thought that I had measured out 600 micrograms. Later it occurred to me that a substantial amount of the solvent had evaporated in storage, and that each drop was as much as doubled in potency.

The fast drop. A trapdoor. Like on the scaffold of a gallows. The frightening terror of absolute emptiness.

His head dropped onto the table and his arms splayed out. The cards flew all over. He fell out of his chair, some vases and books and another chair falling with him. Then his body twitched and I watched him turn into a bear. His whole body grew taut. A deep guttural growl sounded from his throat and he began speaking in tongues. His eyes had completely glazed over. None of it was pretend. I saw the strength: two men couldn't have held him down, if he had run amok.

Trance. Possession. The other side of shamanism, across that terrifying abyss: shape-shifters. There live skin-walkers and werewolves.

Think twice before offering a full moon medicine to a shape-shifter.

The Crystal Road: (field report, a man, artist):

All of the parallel universes were there. My childhood was there, and the death of my son. It was pure terror, all of it swirling through these breaks in time, breaks in what moments are made of. The whole universe was turned inside out. To get back I had to pull it all back through my asshole.

I had to destroy the worlds that I didn't choose to exist in. And some of them tried to stop me from doing that, they kept calling to me, telling me not to do it, that they wanted to exist. We were in the place you are before you are born, and the place you go to after you die. Once you step out of time, once you break through that continuum, all spaces are connected.

That I existed was the most amazing thing. The whole thing was an absurdity, but I couldn't come back unless I accepted it, all of it. All the pain of my life was waiting there, I---'s death was there waiting, but it was like I had to choose, it took effort. I had to accept all of it in order to return to this particular universe.

Poesis:

Ortega extracted dried and milled leaves with hot chloroform. He isolated salvinorin from the green residue left over after evaporating the solvent with column chromatography. He used thin layer chromatography to test for salvinorin in the fractions, and found it in the sixth and seventh of thirteen. The TLC plates were developed with 10 per cent phosphomolybdic acid in isopropanol (ethyl acetate/hexane, 45:55, Rf=0.7). Crystallize from methanol, melting point 238-240°C.

Valdes extracted with ether. He partitioned the dried extract between hexanes and 90 percent aqueous methanol, saving the polar components in the methanolic fraction.

An excellent product I call "4x" can be prepared by evaporating an ethanolic (or methanolic) extraction of the dried leaves, and sopping up the oily goo left over after evaporating or distilling off the solvent with "cleaned" leaves rubbed through a strainer. Use an amount of cleaned leaf equal to about one-quarter the original weight of the leaves extracted. The 4x enrichment is suitable for smoking in small pipes.

I've tried "10x" also. In that case, wash out the non-polar compounds from the goo with hexanes, more or less as outlined by Valdes. Keep track of your weights.

Ethnobotany:

Tea brewed from four or five pairs of leaves is medicinal. Mazatecs use the tea for headache and rheumatism. It is also said to be good for anemia and problems of the eliminatory functions.

The Plant:

The leaves of the moon. With no other plant are preparation and ground state training so crucial. *Ska Pastora* is a moon doctors' plant. It could typify lunar medicine all by itself, its light is so pale and white. The lunar medicine is needed not to avert disaster, as is sometimes the case when dealing with the phantastica, but to hear the words, to comprehend the presentation. "Just this" is not at all the same thing as "merely this."

She will take who you are and run away with it faster than any plant I know.

Effects:

The word *incredible* gets used a lot.

How Taken: Bottom Line:

Grow enough leaves to provide eleven to twenty-two leaves, thirty to sixty grams, for each person. It is traditional to have an extra bundle on hand as a "booster" for those who desire to return to the trance after their initial voyage.

Arrange the leaves so that the stems all face the same direction. Place them on the altar. Burn a little incense. Do this in a comfortable room, with cushions, preferably one that can be completely darkened. In the city, a tarp pinned over a window will keep out streetlights and such. Start as soon as it is dark.

By candlelight, roll your bundle of leaves into a cigar and chew away until it is gone, or until you can't find your mouth. Or until. Chew well. If you are not going to swallow, or are not going to swallow all of it, provide each person with a nice dish or basket to receive the exhausted quid. But chew long and well. Then blow the candle out. Be accepting. Cleanse your palate with some tequila, or some beer.

Are your eyes open or closed? Are you sure?

After about forty-five minutes, if you didn't finish all of your leaves, eat the rest. Or eat six or twelve new leaves, if you are inclined. Chanting and singing are appropriate, as is some tobacco. It is easier to get the leaves down if you have fasted half a day before the *velada*. Eat after: at midnight or thereabouts.

Best not to drive, but, if you must, never before you have eaten. Soups go well, and fruits.

Remember: your friends, the darkness, the gathering, and the chewing are all integral parts of the whole experience, and have been so for many, many centuries. The ancestors of two kingdoms await you.

The Ally:

*Sometimes the sage whispers, sometimes it shouts.
Sometimes it tells you to sing, sometimes*

*it takes your voice, walks off, leaving you
rooted, eyeless, and with the kind of voice
a plant has.*

The Plant:

Enthusiasm. Entheos.

The plant of the gods, brought within.

*La planta de los dioses.
La planta amada de los dioses.*

The wise plant, the sage plant,
the plant of the Savioress.

*La planta sabia.
La salvia de las adivinas.
La salvia sabia.*

We welcome the plant.

*La planta que salva.
La Salvadora de los sabios.*

We are not different from the plant.

It is we who must save the gods.

It is we who must be diviners.

Somos nosotros que debemos que ser adivinos.

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