**Spirit of San Pedro**

​San Pedro only recently appeared on my ever-expanding list of experiences to have. I can't even remember who first told me about San Pedro, but I think it was my one friend and it somehow stuck. Then through a series of fortunate events, there was an opening on a San Pedro ceremony on the weekend I just happened to be free. I initially planned to do this journey with 2 friends of mine, but something resonated with me the moment I saw the message. I spoke to my dear friends and they could not attend but encouraged me to go. I have a tendency to be more grounded when doing a journey with people I know, and I really felt that joining this ceremony was important to me as an individual you attend to benefit us as a group. More knowledge the better, that was my original plan. The night before I ingested some news that for some reason did not sit well with me, as well as my best friend and neighbour was moving out of her home that very day, and I also used that as a lever to pry myself out of the house for the day. The fasting was hard for me, as I really do like to eat! I researched all I could about the plant and what the effects would be in a clinical and logical way which is first step for any new experience. SO, I THOUGHT.

I went to bed just before 12, having been unsettled and trying to gauge what my intent was for the next day. I woke up at 2am. Crying my eyes out. The same vicious thoughts I had gone to sleep with had grown and expanded, filling me with doubt and sadness. I tried to rest. I tried to sleep. But it was not forthcoming. I knew I had made a decision, but I just didn’t know what it was yet. There were taunting voices, terrible images, and soul draining anguish coming from places I just could not stop. Why was I doing this ceremony? What was my real reason?

Was I just hangry? Angry because I was hungry? I tried laughter, reading, watching some series but this oppressive force was just weighing me down from all quarters. Did not want me to walk out the door. As the sun rose and my alarm went off, I knew it was time to go. Then I couldn't find this, where did I put that? My brain was scrambled, my eyes sore from crying. Maybe I should cancel. Maybe I am not ready for this. There was no excitement.
But I gathered all my stuff (I wrote a list luckily the night before), nearly forgetting my journal. Got into the car and set off. 30mins later after a very nice and quiet drive I arrived. To closed gates. I was way too early! I couldn’t work my phone properly to get the phone number. Everything was saying leave/leave / leave. I pulled out the driveway, on the edge of leaving even though I knew I was early when this car came around the corner, and let me pull out, a big smiley face inside and a friendly wave as he then pulled into the driveway. I then realised that must have be Volker, or someone connected to the ceremony. I had not met Volker before, but my good friend Dale was very delighted when he heard it was Volker leading the ceremony, and if Dale likes someone, I know I will too.

I then drove in, and distracted by my phone, I stayed in the car. Volker immediately come to the car and greeted, with a big hug. Juanita was there as well, unpacking. He said I am welcome to come inside, but they are just setting up still so I said I have some unfinished business on the phone and he left it at that. My neighbour had woken up after finishing packing at 2:45 in the morning and was chatting. I could feel her love and concern for me which made me burst into tears yet again. I knew then deeply that this is exactly where I was meant to be. This was my day, my lesson. And the voices did not stop. They threw images at me that splintered my thoughts even further, no control. What the f was going on? I keep my shit together god damn it! I said my goodbyes to my dearest friends and switched my phone off. The moment it was off, silence everywhere. I went inside, where I greeting Volker and Juanita properly, the air was nice and cool. I was very nervous, they were calm which calmed me. I chose my spot at the door, where the air could flow past me. And as purging could happen, even though I had my bucket, a fast exit was planned. slowly the rest arrived. a small group totalling 7 including Volker and Juanita. 2 had done the ceremony before, the other 3 had not (including me). I felt and gauged the group, and all I felt was acceptance. We were all on our own paths and this was the meeting place for us at this point in time and we all accepted it as such. Once everyone was there, we started pretty promptly at 8:30am. (If I get the order wrong here, please forgive me Volker!) I rem Volker welcoming everyone and spoke about the proceeds of the ceremony.

Smudging, both the room and all of us was first. Followed by us each picking a card. Volker explained to us what to expect from the medicine plant, San Pedro. We did received information about the ceremony and the San Pedro beforehand which was very informative but there is nothing quite like someone actually telling you the story. He mentioned this was a safe space, for real healing to take place, and confidentiality was paramount, which was so important not just to hear but to feel. The smudging of us individually outside was so tender and real, the tears flowed again. But the voices and images had stopped. The bad ones. And before Volker voiced it that we need to set intent for the day, I heard it. Why are you really here Angie? What healing do you need? The answer was immediate. To be free of toxic relationships and to heal my broken heart. Sounds so simple right? After picking cards, Volker lit a candle and placed it in the centre of the room, drawing inspiration from the Native Americans who traditionally told stories around the fire and that was significant to me immediately. No wonder we are drawn to fire at a braai, isn't that where some of the best conversations are? That and the kitchen (which use to have fires). Juanita lead and set her intention, read her card out which related strongly to her intent.

And so it went around. My card was strength. Which had a pattern on it that was made of triangles! My shape. I could barely voice my intent properly, let alone read my card out. And this was before even taking the SP. I knew that today I would fall apart, and I had the safe space to do it in. Fall apart to be rebuilt new and whole. Everyone had different intents, and one even had a card chosen for him. He picked the pile up and it stayed behind!
Volker spoke about the SP itself, and the significance of what the plant does to the individual. That it is the spirit of SP that works its way into you and brings the lesson and insights to you. It is a masculine energy, but gentle. All about the sun the SP is a day ceremony. Once all intentions where set, we took the SP. It is slimy, but no slimier than aloe and tasted a bit like kale. Quite green flavour. We had bits of fresh watermelon to help to get it down or take the taste away. It all went down the hatch one time. Others struggled a bit, but it OK. We all got there. We followed straight into an hour’s yoga with Juanita. This helped settle the SP in (and in some ways not), but Juanita has this amazingly calm and clear voice, one that comes with many years of yoga teaching and quite confidence of knowing what to do when to do it. I did purge a little, but it was something that wasn't flinched at. The nausea for me came and went a few times but nothing to distract from the yoga, which afterwards I noted was very essential to the process. Junita was so calm, helped and guided where there necessary. I rem afterwards, almost sad it was over. We then did our loo runs, collected our water and journals etc and it was off to the forest. SP is dehydrating as it is so water is super encouraged. And I was already dehydrating from all the crying. We spoke and connected with each other all the way to the forest, where Volker then requested for solo experiences and silence as it is a very personal experience and we were all there for us to heal and work with nature, listen to nature, hear the lesson. Slowly I began to realise what was actually happening and why I was here. It wasn't to escape, it was to find out exactly what my issue was, and to fix it. I had spent too much time holding space for those that don’t need it any more. The why was only revealed later. How did the SP physically make me feel? Fluffy when I walked. The ground was slippery in places, so I had to focus. We did set up a home base and then all went off.

I didn’t want to go too far. a cut down tree appealed to me, the concentric circles from a source told a story, this trees story. Times of plenty, time of lean. Times of growth, times of not growing. But all a part of this trees life. It shaped it into the log it now was. And even in death, it was beautiful. We cannot see each other’s life rings. But my lesson was about the cells that made up this once tall tree. Every cell was important. Every cell made this tree what it was. I am important. I matter. I am one cell in a very vast network of energy, of beings, of plants of everything. Does this make me feel insignificant? No, quite the opposite. It made me realise I was the only person allowing myself to be boxed, to be stood on, to be abused. Me. Because I saw myself as not worthy of love. Not worthy of healthy attention. Not worthy of being free of this oppressive weight in my soul. I found a spot, semi sheltered and sat there. Just staring at the earth and crying. Crying crying crying. The sky even cried a bit with me. One of the others walked past me and I noticed he had taken his shoes off. I am Miss No Shoes so they came off. The minute I buried my feet into the soil, I understood something else. Even in death we give life. The tree decomposes and becomes a part of the soil which nourishes the next tree. Something we learn at a young age, the great circle of life. But to feel it, really understand the importance of it was revolutionary. Volker played the most beautiful Bamboo pipe, filling the air with potent magic. I closed my eyes and breathed it all in. I didn’t get much visual from the SP, but there was some movement, gentle flowing of patterns, nothing I couldn't handle. And the words came to me. Learn to let go that which does not serve you. You do not owe anyone to hold their space longer than you need to. You are strong enough to let go. You are worthy of love, and to be loved. And you are loved. But you do not love yourself and that is the problem. Why do you not love yourself? What has driven you so deeply down? Volker came to me, and I was not embarrassed by crying. I was not hiding anything anymore. I let myself fall apart in his arms, to hold my space for a moment and let me be me. All my emotions came gushing out. we spoke, more like he spoke I spluttered, but it was okay. I needed to fall apart. I then picked a card. Prometheus.

Titan God of Forethought. Creator of man from clay in his own image. I realised I cannot mould my children when I am broken inside, when I don’t love myself, I will mould broken children. Where did this all come from? Volker left me and I went deeper. Then like a sledge hammer it hit me. I could not forgive myself for having ended the lives of not one, but two fetes. And that had weighed heavy on me for 12 years now. I could not love myself. I could pretend to, pretend to be the happiest person on the planet, give freely away what I should be managing, leaving me empty. And that, broke me completely. I surrender complete to SP. And then cell by cell I was rebuilt. Each part was washed in tears, shaken off and put back together. That little splinter which had festered all these years popped out. I wasn't too sure anymore of what to expect. And then a butterfly flew past in the distance. I watched it dart and weave its way through the sunbeams and trees. See, said the spirit, the butterfly is important. It will feed on a flower; a seemingly random flower and the flower will become a seed. The seed will become the forest. A forest the butterfly will never see. I smiled. A soul smiles. There was a lot going on in the kop. Moving on did not mean it’s a bad thing. Speaking my truth was not a bad thing.
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I had a conversation with Juanita and another traveller, and we spoke about toxic relationships. It came out that then you are not in balance, and don’t look after your energy, and be selfish at times, there are negative entities that are drawn to you as they are parasitic and feed off your never-ending circle of negative thoughts, self-doubt etc. Once you know, acknowledge and rein in those energies, your energies, it’s not a fight anymore, they simply move on as they give up. Holding my ground and my own space, to withdraw and recharge and be "selfish" was imperative. Then others appeared as well, we all chatted a bit, ate some fruit and laughed. SP has a sense of humour. I pictured him as this short Mexican with a mop of black hair, some huge black snood, white shirt, breeches and trousers. Like Mario Brothers...
As light as I felt, as relieved as I was to gain all these insights, it still bothered me. But a whisper came past, we are not done. It was Volker! Juanita explained how no matter how many journeys you’ve done, the lesson is different, it affects you differently. She said how Volker when he is cooking a batch, he sings to it, treats it with such love and respect, really infuses his energy into the brew itself and it makes sense why we all connected with Volker so deeply. SP is not something you go to the shop and buy off the shelf and take to have a good time. NO WAY!! It’s not a getaway for a day, not a spa day where you go, do a ceremony and then integrate into your normal life when done. NO. This is a teacher plant for a reason. It’s a healing plant for a REASON.
We spent hours in the forest.... But then it was time to go to do breathe work. Which I had never done before.
Breathwork was incredible. To explain that I would need another 3 pages. Safe to say, I saw the most vivid reams of colours and 2 voices came out and said please forgive yourself, we hold no bad will against you. We forgave you a long time ago. You need to look after your living children. And be present in the now. That was the confirmation I had been seeking.
An hour's breathwork also helped cleared the last of the SP out. I emerged whole at the end. Volker lit the candle once again and we shared our lessons, our messages. Was revolutionary how the plant spirit showed us so individually our lessons and healed us and continued to do its work for a long time afterwards. Even now 10 days later I get glimpses and reminders from nature to trust in the message, to forge my own path without fear or Reliance on others approval or permission. It was a most remarkable experience which is not to be taken lightly in any which way. The spirit of San Pedro is a most remarkable one, and I am eternally grateful to have done this first journey and forever changed by it. Thank you, Volker and Juanita, and all those that where there.