

Here is my testimonial:

The plant connection workshop was part of the Wild Woman retreat I did with Klaudia in June 2018. The truth is, I was never that interested in plants. My mother loves plants and is a phytotherapist. Every time she would speak about plants, I would sort of zone out. My husband Jack loves plants too. He loves gardening, reading about their properties, trying new health recipes. So being surrounded as I am by people who love plants and not having felt any interest for them myself, I was rather content thinking it was just "not my thing".

When I saw that the programme for the day involved plants, I wasn't that enthralled. I thought, a shame my husband isn't here, he would have loved it. I felt that I was the wrong person to attend this workshop, and I considered skipping it. Good thing I didn't, as it ended up being one of the most powerful experiences I have ever had. I decided to stay, a bit by duty towards my husband, thinking that since he was not here, I could share the info with him later. So I tagged along with the group, learning about nettles and blackberry bushes. During the whole time, I felt that I didn't belong to the group, that I was a bit of an impostor. It was interesting, and some aspects called to my mind more than others: the fact that Klaudia would thank the spirit of the plant and make an offering before she picked it -- I thought that it was a nice thing to do, an acknowledgement, and that more often than not we are totally disconnected from where things come from.

After the walk, we went to lie down in a circle, and Klaudia took her drum out. She asked us to think of a plant. I wasn't too sure which one to choose and in the end the fox glove came to my mind. At the beginning of the retreat we had each been given a little piece of paper with the name of a plant or animal written on it, and asked to observe it. Mine was the fox glove. I felt fascinated that it was so delicate, and yet so poisonous. That someone could die from just touching its gorgeous little bells. Plus I loved its vibrant, purple colour. Klaudia started beating her drum and talked us through a journey. We were to go through the hole in a tree, and down its roots. I think there might have been a river there. I can't remember, I fell asleep. A very deep, pitch black sleep. Usually when I close my eyes, my mind starts wandering and images come to me. Not this time, there was nothing. I woke suddenly, with a sense of urgency, and no idea where I was. Then I remembered and noticed that everybody around me was sitting up. So I sat up too. The drum had stopped, and Klaudia was asking us what the plant had told us. This is when I realised that this had been a shamanic journey. I must have missed this piece of info earlier. My first feeling was huge disappointment: I have always been curious about shamanism, and having a shamanistic experience was one of my dreams. And now I had just had the opportunity and I had blown it by falling asleep. I felt silly. I also felt like the bad student, the one who hadn't had done her homework and wasn't listening, because everyone in the group was able to picture the journey, meeting the spirit of the plant, and talking to it. Except for me. The only thing I could remember was black, velvety, nothingness and the feeling of having been pulled out of a deep sleep at the wrong time. I felt tired.

We then broke for lunch. Ladies were talking and one, who had missed the workshop said that she wished she had done it as she had always wanted to go on a shamanic journey. I said I felt the same, that although I was there, I had missed it too and felt frustrated. Another lady replied that maybe I hadn't missed it. Maybe something happened on a deeper level and I just couldn't remember.

The afternoon saw us being sent on a wandering. Shortly before my turn, I realised I had forgotten my water bottle in my tent. So I ran back to it, worrying that I was going to miss being sent off if I wasn't quick enough. All of a sudden, a fully formed thought pops into my mind, as if coming from somewhere else: "hello". It is so clear that although I hear it in my head it seems to come from outside. I stop, look around, and I see a fox glove. I think I must have dreamt, so I ignore it and continue. I hear "hello" again. I look around, and see the fox glove again. And I feel so happy, it's

like the excitement of meeting a new friend again. It means it worked, I did connect with the plant!! I can't stop smiling at the plant. Then in my head, the thought "Thank you for choosing me" comes out of nowhere. I am so thrilled I almost want to hug the plant (and I might have done if it wasn't so poisonous). I feel this huge wave of love towards it. I want to say, "of course I would choose you, you are the most beautiful. You stand straight, you are bright and you are so powerful!"

After getting my bottle, I am sent off in the field. I can't think where to go. I have a terrible sense of direction and I don't want to get lost. And then I see a fox glove in the distance. I am drawn to it so I go in its direction. When I reach it, I see another one. And I just advance like this, following the fox gloves through fern and bramble until all of a sudden, I feel this fatigue again. Almost insurmountable. It's like I can't walk, I feel so tired, I need to lie down, here and now. I try, but I am worried that I may never wake up so I drag my feet back, thinking all along that I need to make it back through the gates and then I will be safe, I will be in the camp, and I can lie down. I walk past the gates and I sort of collapse. I stay there, not able to move, feeling shivery, and then I manage to take myself to the tent, where I fall into this pitch black slumber again. When I wake up it is late, and I feel fine again. I feel that it is the plant that has put me in this state but I can't quite understand why. Maybe the teachings were all done on a subconscious level? I feel both a bit scared and elated, thinking that possibly I should have chosen a milder plant to start with, but proud that the plant has connected with me, too.

I left the retreat early, and I found that after being back home in urban London, what I missed the most was the fox gloves. I was thinking about them all the time. I felt in withdrawal. I felt I wanted to see some again. I looked but couldn't see any in London. And life went back to normal.

I was reluctant to tell anyone about this experience, because I thought people wouldn't understand and would belittle it. But I told my Dad. He is doctor who believes in shamanism and he agreed to look into the side effects of the plant for me. The next day, he sent me a picture of a medical textbook, listing the side effects of ingesting fox glove as "extreme fatigue, difficulty to walk", which was exactly what I had experienced.

About a month after the camp, I took my 3 kids to Oxfordshire for the day. At the end of the day, as I was driving back home on the A1 (different way from the one I took on my way out), with the 3 kids deeply asleep at the back, I was thinking I could do with a nap myself and started wondering whether I should stop somewhere, whether it was safe for me to keep on driving. I was fighting sleep, looking for the next exit when suddenly I saw a flash a purple in the corner of my eye. This got enough adrenaline pumping in me to fully wake me up. And then I saw another one, and it was as if it was there just for me not to fall asleep, as if it were protecting me.

This is what my experience has been with the fox glove. It either makes me sleep or keeps me awake :). I feel a lot of tenderness and a very powerful bond with the plant. I would love to explore and strengthen this bond, but I am not sure how. I feel a whole new world has opened up, full of possibilities that I am not grasping yet, and that it is waiting for me to explore it.

Thank you Klaudia for this most incredible experience!

Love,
D.E.