

My life was lit bright by Indigo Flame.....

How a very special horse saved her human.

I was broken; I just didn't realise it yet. I stayed frenetically busy at work, partying, numbing. I seemed to have it all under control, just occasionally veering too close to the edge, a toe or a heel slipping over, some loose stones falling, a slight scramble and I was back.

It wasn't OK, I was a breakdown waiting to happen, an emotional tornado whipping against the cliff face again and again and again, not diffusing the power and intensity, rather knocking it off course occasionally but only truly fuelling it.

What led to this is another story, rich in its own right and deserving of a separate telling. What matters here is the horse that saved me.

I had a dream. I had been thinking of purchasing a chestnut horse that was looking for a new home. I knew him, I liked him, but I hadn't owned a horse since I moved to Australia and I lived near the city, worked there full time, had recently been out of work for some time and had neither the resources nor the knowledge of agistment options to make a hasty decision. I was deliberating...then I had the dream. In my dream the chestnut horse fell down to the ground, ill – I was there – a vet appeared – we were desperate to save the horse whose head I cradled in my hands. The horse was dying, then suddenly all was activity and the horse morphed before me into a dark brown horse who got up and stood before me. She was beautiful. She was my horse. Some weeks later, after the chestnut had gone elsewhere and while I was still rueing my decision/indecision, I met my horse in the flesh. I recognised her immediately, as she did me, acknowledging me in a very deliberate look, nicker and a touch to the arm as I went to stroke her.

I had to have her. She wasn't for sale. I pursued this with intention. It manifested. I was ecstatic.

I came to know her, tentatively at first. I was in awe of her spirit. She was contained, so was I – walls slowly broke down, because she held me accountable. She was there, strong and true. Don't tell me she said – discuss it with me. I will negotiate but only if you are authentic and trustworthy. I had to drop some façade, chink away some wall, cut away some armour...become vulnerable, reveal who I really was, feel what I really felt, face it and prepare to be rejected, for not being enough, not worthy, not in control. Ahh such a challenge, I could not have done that with a human, with one who talked, who judged, who interpreted. I had a mirror held to me and I had to make the adjustments to reflect an image I was more comfortable with, that she was more receptive to, that she softened to, leaned into – and ultimately came to lean upon.

Suddenly I had reason to care, to hope, to aspire, to live, to love. I became more responsible. I changed my patterns. I no longer went out partying Saturday nights because she was waiting for me Sunday morning and I wanted to show up, be present, live up to her standards.

Over the years we gave each other some scary moments, we were vulnerable, we were strong, we were nurturing, we were nurtured. We were always authentic. She showed me the power of that. She communicated with me on a level I had not previously experienced. She took me on a journey

that led me to begin my quest for more knowledge and experience of horses as guides, as teachers, as healers. I knew the power of their therapeutic ability as mounts: I had been an accredited instructor/coach with Riding for the Disabled for some years and had borne witness to many breakthroughs, improvements and joyous tastes of freedom. This was different. She was my soul mate; my best friend. I was connected to her in quite a different way.

I became a qualified Eponaquest Instructor because of her. I quit the city job and life that no longer served me because of her. I made many new friends because of her. I developed steadfastness, conscientiousness, a willingness to serve and love wholeheartedly because of her. She made me feel whole, worthy and brought wisdom. I felt alive in her presence, vitally so when I rode her, especially when she was in a feisty mood – we would run, gallop and she would buck or spook and I would laugh out loud, overflowing with joy and the beauty of being alive, of being.

As she aged we went through some vulnerable times. The equine influenza epidemic had me fearful for her life, so ill was she in her mid 20s. I researched and read vociferously and she had the best of herbal and veterinary care. Some years later, when she was now just going out for a trail ride, or having a bit of a trot and canter round the back paddock to keep ticking over, she had a fall, unmounted – just being exuberant after rain she raced around and slipped on a corner, losing her legs and crashing down. She seemed OK to the owner of the agistment property but at feed time she came out of her shelter and promptly collapsed. As I got frustrated and agonised in traffic on the motorway out of the city, the vet talked me through what he was doing, giving her pain relief and fluids. She had stress colicked due to the crashing fall, realising her vulnerability and that her aging body was not as reliable and strong as it once was. When I got there she was eating some dinner but turned to me, tucked her head into my heart and said “I did something silly – I’m glad you’re here”.

Supporting Indigo through her aging was easier, but a parallel process nonetheless, to supporting my mother through her aging, illness, decline and death. Choosing the moment for Indigo to die after she suffered a stroke, initially mild, but deteriorating through a cold, wet night was hard. They were the worst and best 27 hours of my life.

She wanted to stay for me, I desperately wanted her to but knew this was my time to step up and show her what she had made of me, I told her I could cope, and I could release her. She laid her cheek on mine. It stopped raining – the rainbow bridge appeared, I sang her songs to her – the ones that were specially hers. All the horses stood guard and held the space for us.

I was broken. But this time I was broken wide open. Wide open to her spirit, her energy entered me; her presence was and is so keenly felt. She is everywhere – she visits and guides, she has channelled through my big gelding who was in the next door paddock through that 27 hour ordeal.

She is keenly missed, but remembered gratefully daily. She broke me open – she taught me how to feel again, how to show up and be present, how to care, to love, to be accountable, trustworthy vulnerable, compassionate, courageous and connected.

My life was lit bright by Indigo Flame.....it still is and always will be.



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