

Passion Needed to Preserve Natural World

When I was asked to write a piece for the Reading for the Rainforest fundraiser, I thought of the vast amounts of forest that have been lost to development, all over our beautiful planet. Though the motivators for this vary, from human survival to profit and greed, often a major underlying contributor is a lack of appreciation for what forests provide to the world, frequently nurtured by a lack of connectivity to nature.

Thankfully, here on Salt Spring Island, most of us still retain much of that connection – enough, in fact, to collectively pull off the awesome feat of saving the Creekside Rainforest. On the other hand, folks from the city, and even a few Salt Spring residents, motivated by the profits and comfort of development, often forget the beauty and gifts of precious forestlands. Many of us, especially the younger generations, may move away to a city one day. Hopefully, those who do will remember that...

In every one of us there is an innocent child. There is a part of us that could gaze at a butterfly for eternity, unaware of the passing time, only to admire the delicate gossamer wings and the glowing wash of colours painted across their surface. There is a piece of us that could let the wind tousle our hair as we run through a field of tall blue grass without looking back; our destination the horizon. There is a fragment of our hearts that recognizes the indescribable beauty of a simple fern leaf; that would take the time to feel the rough spores on its underbelly.

There is a story. It is in every one of us, but many have chosen to hide it and instead hold a mask in front of their faces, which allows them to blend into humanity. The mask is painted with the same pattern, identical to the next. It nods when their heart says no, and slowly shakes back and forth when their soul is screaming yes. They have become disconnected from one of our greatest needs. This is the story of loss.

Her toes begin to feel numb as the icy cool of the stream rushes over them. She watches as the sun reflects off the water making the pebbles below the surface glimmer, proclaiming the mighty glory of this place. Her skirt is sodden from the damp soil, but it feels good as she lays back and lets the gentle sounds of the earth become absorbed into her skin. Leaves rustle in the wind, waving to her. The branches of the trees twist and turn, winding their arms together in an elaborate contemporary dance. This is perfection; and she feels her perfect world will always be here.

A few years later her paradise remains intact, as she knew it would. The trees have grown, the luscious salal bushes have exploded, and the sour tasting Oregon grapes contrast the green in their violet splendor. She dashes through the undergrowth, a skip to her step. Book in hand, she nestles in the grove between the dominating roots of a giant oak. She reaches above her head to feel the coarse wood beneath her fingers. The ravines and crevasses of the trunk ripple, a river of bark frozen in time.

She grows up, transforms from adolescent to adult, and finds herself staring at her reflection in the tinted windows of a skyscraper in the city she now calls home. Behind her is a park made of pavement. A rogue leaf from a lone tree flutters past her face, floats down onto her shoulder, and she flicks it aside; what was once considered beauty now lacks any connection to her inner self. Divorced from her land of peace she has lost all desire to preserve her haven.

Without our passion to protect the last glowing embers of the natural world, they too will join the artificial. Our emerald kingdoms are becoming but fleeting images in the suburbs of our minds.

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