

Whispers of the Giants: Venturing into the Venerated Redwoods

Millenia passed and the redwoods remained upright. In their grand form, they have seen the ups and downs of kingdoms and tracked the journeys of different cultures. They witness my presence—the little and weak person wandering into their domain in search of an unspoken desire.

In the early hours of the morning as I approach the forest's shadows the fog is still heavy in the air. I sense the forest welcoming me through the dampness enveloping my body. As I land on the trail my feet dip into the plush earth creating a soft sound eerily tranquil almost.

I visited this location not for its beauty; the beauty is present nonetheless. I came for solitude. To be engulfed by nature. I seek to revive a feeling I have pushed aside in the busyness and clutter of my experiences.

I discovered the roots of these trees to be broad but shallow. Connecting underground creates a large and obscured network that binds them together in storms. People believe that redwoods function best when they are together; their force derives from their collective links. While I am under their aged canopies I contemplate if this applies to us too. Maybe we are designed to connect with others; the world may lead us to believe otherwise.

Venturing into the forest's depths the giant trees surround me; their robust trunks and reaching branches sway quietly in the breeze. This setting is straightforward to lose yourself in and causes you to feel as though you are meandering through an old temple designed by history instead of by individuals. The environment transmits a significant level of respect that most can't verbally express; it must be sensed.

In the woods, amid quiet for many hours I could note the sound of the leaves rustling and of the birds singing. This place seems to be old and echoes a slower rhythm of time around these huge trees. I breathe deeply and my thoughts stop providing me with a calm I have not known for months.

The peace is brief and can be interrupted by the stress I navigate—The profound distress and uncertainties linked to an unpredictable reality that escalates with chaos. I reached here to run away; however, my thoughts persevered after I left. They attach themselves strongly like fog and do not ease off.

I set up my tent near a small area letting light shine through the trees. As the wind flows through the foliage pine and land waft in the air reviving memories of outings with family long before life got messy. I enjoy time next to the fire while the flames sway and I detect the crackling of the wood as the evening darkens.

An owl's distant call catches my attention floating through the trees while it proves I am shared company. Even though they are still the trees seem to come alive. It detects and acts as if it communicates an awareness on a particular scale.

The First Days in the Forest

After the second day in the forest, the experience of quiet had altered for me. At first, it seemed weighty and felt remote and congested to me. It seemed unusual in the quiet atmosphere with no buzzing phones or conversation. But now, as I hiked deeper into the heart of the redwoods, the quiet seemed more like a companion, walking alongside me, clearing space for something else: Consider more profound thoughts or allow a greater kind of listening to arise.

Slowly. I was aware of the faint sounds of the leaves gently swaying and the distant water droplets as the initial mist lifted from the trees. The forest began to make a soft noise and every sound implied great significance. As I walked through the green carpet underfoot my rhythm slowed down while I sensed the faint pulses of my heart.

I had not spoken in over two days. With every footstep in the woods, my drive to Converse disappeared completely. In the center of those aged yews, I sensed that communication didn't reach the depth I desired. What message am I meant to deliver within this location?

Above the grand trees appeared parts of blue in the afternoon sky as it brightened. Direct light shone through the canopy in wide rays revealing the entire scope of the redwoods nearby. A handful of trees reached heights of around 300 feet showing thick bark and long branches extending towards the clouds. Moving around that area resembled exploring a terrain meant for giant beings.

This setting held me in a place like its microscopic part.

It was not a feeling of helplessness, but rather a feeling of integration into an enormous whole, into something bigger than all of us. The redwoods quietly endured even centuries of changes, they ran deep into the ground, their tendrils intertwining and thus making them so strong. And it was a reminder that all living things, in however much or little way, were linked. Despite appearances to the contrary, these things were united in some fashion. That thought occurred to me as I kept going on the trail.

Meeting the Ranger

I was able to meet the ranger the next morning when the mist was receding slightly into the horizon. He stepped forward out of the treeline like a figure from a fairy tale: gnarled, leathery,

and caramelized by years of sweat and toil. He had long hair and silver and gray scruffy hair tying his hair in a messy hair bun. Apart from this, he had such lively and intelligent eyes with the hint of an old man who had spent all his resources and lifetime in the woods.

“Morning,” he responded, touching the rim of his hat as it slightly tilted towards me. “They told this on and told me that ‘You’ve been walking a long while.’”

I nodded. “Maybe it was an attempt at something like not wanting to find me or lose myself,”

He nodded to the ranger and the man gave him a slow, sly smile. ‘That is the kind of forest where that will be appropriate.’

You can also discover your inner self in such a place if you pay keen attention.”

I was startled, without the faintest idea of how to respond. What I had not looked for when coming to the redwoods was company; I looked for answers or at least I looked for an escape. It was more than strange to encounter someone who knew more about me than I cared to acknowledge.

The ranger then pointed at me and with his hand gestured for me to follow him. “I’m going to the new place,” he told me. “The Cathedral. Have you ever been there?”

I replied in the negative and he began to move and I followed him as he effortlessly marched through shrubs and overgrown vegetation. I followed him; as we strolled he chatted. He spoke to me about the tree and the earth and life, how the roots of the trees are large and thin and grow in every direction, and in the center of all the roots of all the trees are the roots of the earth. “They depend on one another,” he said. “That’s what keeps them standing even in the worst type of storm.” Together they would not survive a week. But when combined — in fact, they have been around for thousands of years.

I listened, fascinated. Of course, I know about the redwoods, I had read about their ability to overcome all the odds, their strength. Although it is evident when reading about them, hearing it from the ranger, a man who worked among them for twenty years added a new life to the forest. It was not just trees that were planted together but a society of plants that went about their business supporting each other below the rim.

After we had been walking for several minutes the Ranger who was in front of me said something. At last, we turn a corner, and there before us, a small glade; at the middle of it- the grove. The Cathedral.

A circle of trees was standing, & around the trunks were numerous & large branches, elevated & stretching upward the trees, thus forming a planter natural umbrella. It was warm and the green sun rays panned the brown floor through the dense cover of the trees above. It was still here and yet it was so different ... denser to a certain extent and one could feel the trees leaning in on the open space.

The ranger pulled up to the edge of the grove and faced me. "I must tell you, Ma'am, this is a sacred place." A lot of people come here seeking to be solved," Joseph explained. Some find them. Some don't. But the trees? There's always something to say if people take the time to listen."

With these words inside me, I followed him into the groove. Saying the law of silence was never violated here as the place was holy and quiet. It was so quiet I could hear my breath, it was a simple, rhythmic sound of the wind blowing through the trees. They stood rigid like guards with ancient wisdom in them throughout the ages.

I stood still and put my hands on my face as if a breeze kissed the grove and touched me.

The Cathedral of Trees

The Cathedral operated in many aspects, such that the mission was not just a place; it transformed into an amazing trip. The year-old trees gave a new feel to it being surrounded by such woods we decided to take a break where we were. This made me nurture the feelings of sadness and confusion that I had to place in the sacred area.

I crossed my legs, sat at the roots of a redwood tree, and with my back against the trunk, I shut my eyes. I put down on soft ground where the grass felt cool to my bare skin and smelled the rich smell of pine and earth all around me. The feeling of the leaves overhead swaying, as well as the sound of the wind, came close.

Past monthly familiarity notes receded into calm as I had never known it.

I went back to considering this explanation given by the ranger; she said that the redwoods are connected and support each other beneath the ground. I thought about how my life had put me in a position, where I felt the need to isolate myself from the ones closest to me to feel bad about myself and to act lost all the time. I assumed I had to handle all the tasks on my own due to realizing I could handle all things alone.

For all the trees of the wood, that is where I realized my mistake.

As they pointed out redwoods are best together so should connections or relationships be. All of us are designed to be tied and tied down to one another in tough times. By being connected we draw on our strength and resilience. In this case, the community is the body, and each individual is a member of this body.

For the first time in ages, I simply allowed my emotions to shine through as my eyes overflowed with tears. I surrendered quietly to their release as the trees managed me.

I lingered in the grove for a while and tracked how daylight evolved while the sun crossed the sky. As evening approached I realized I was embracing a tranquility I hadn't realized was missing.

When I decided to go I rested my hand on a tree's bark and felt its texture through my skin. I whispered a thank you feeling uncertain about whom to honor; trees or the forest or something beyond meaning.

Returning to Society

The morning after I spent in the woods I put my belongings away and started my return to society. As I walked through the forest once more the fog returned and surrounded it gently while the trees looked on silently.

I went to the Redwoods to seek comprehension and arrange the confusion in my life. I did not locate the insights I was hoping for but hit upon something greater. A sense of belonging. A message that links us all together and shows we belong to something greater than ourselves.

Walking out of the trees allowed me to hear again the noises of the outside—distance engines and various conversations. This time the noise felt manageable. I brought with me the calmness of the woods into the busy world around me.

I realized that life would not change and would remain complicated and there are times that you would have to struggle. But now, I also realize that I can handle them without going through them alone. Like the trees, I was a link within a system, even though I rarely felt the support.

And in that knowledge, I found power, which I had no earlier.

As I drove for some miles leaving the forest far behind and the fog quickly following me, I could not help but cast one final glance at the majestic redwoods towering stony-faced above the horizon.

They would continue to grow in my absence of our presence, they would consist of secondary branches, yet those would always shoot towards the sky. And in this dark, along with troubling and unstable voices, I saw light— not in the result with all the answers, but in the living itself.