

Rainforest Serenade

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Woke up this morning at Marble River to the soaring hush of Sitka Spruce all around us. Far as you can see—ferns lit like green candles. I make my way down a trail carpeted with needles to fetch water. Light stars dancing on the river through the trees. I scramble down root-gnarled banks to a wash of gravel bar.

I have to leave this green cathedral today and it breaks my heart. The river's rush seems to pour my emptiness downstream. I dip my jug into icy clear water. The return to 'civilization' fills me with sickening dread, a grey, creeping despair. Lately my spirit is a high-tensile tuning fork, a weathervane of human spirit. Daily the world-angst scrapes right down to the bone. I should walk into the forest and never turn back.

But then the body breaks in, like a cranky four-year-old. *I'm hungry. I'm thirsty. I hurt. I'm tired.* Too many days lately, I wish I could just give up this nuisance of flesh. Of course, it would help knowing what the alternative is. Was Chief Seattle right? "*Death is not the end, but a doorway into another dimension.*"

I sit in the elbow of a cedar root reaching from the riverbank, tears streaming down. I close my eyes, tilt my head to the sky, and spread my arms. Let the wind tiptoe over my face. I open my eyes: A bald eagle wheels out of the blue, coasting serenely upriver.

Yesterday at Port Hardy, we walked the sea inlet. Watched four young eagles circle and play, then hold court in the highest branches of cedar. There in the crimson seaweed at my feet—an eagle's tailfeather. A gift on baking white sand and stones. To have been blessed once, even twice by such a majestic spirit—but three times! My eyes meander along the pearls and eddies of Marble River. *The vision is everything.* But what vision, I wonder? Maybe knowing comes best with doing.

The Marble River rainforest takes your breath away. Moss carpet alive with dew. Trees tall enough to make you think maybe there is such a thing as heaven. Maybe these evergreen arms really do hold up the sky. Yet even these robust young giants are only 100 years old. Between 1902-06, hurricane force winds levelled most of the old growth here.

Fallen trunks stop me in my tracks, force me to make my way thoughtfully through the forest. Backs broken over ravines, rain-blackened bark alive with lime-green moss. Roots twisting into rainforest air. Serene spirit of lush millennia. There's hope here. If only we stop treating this Earth as our plunder world. Give her the respect—the love—any living being deserves.

Looking at a recreational map of Port Alice, I'm shocked. This priceless grove is nothing more than an island. A dot, surrounded by forestry lands hundreds of hectares larger. I sit at a picnic table on the Port Alice seawalk writing this. Grief grips my throat. Have we gone too far? Is it really too late?

Civilization—the rape of the rest by the self-perceived best. The inevitable trajectory of history—a force we created And seemingly unstoppable, once let loose. No 'manifest destiny' without someone to manifest it. Nothing more than a self-perpetuating ego, wrapped around an equally gigantic death wish. A tragicomedy of consequences. An open question just how much influence we still have on the outcome.

The life force of this rainforest—this Earth—wants to touch us. We only have to open to her. She's generous enough to feed, clothe, and prosper us all. But don't kid yourself. She isn't the one dependent on *us* for survival. Who's to say she'll want us to continue being part of her? If we abuse her too much, she may just hurry us along to our next stop in the universe. We can either merge with this living Earth now or be swept away by the forces we have unleashed.

Of all beings on the planet, we are the ones most gifted with a choice.