

A FED BEAR IS A...



A Story By Kimberley Bear Aware

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At some point in my life, I never appreciated the ability to walk without being plagued by the searing feet of pain skittering upon the preciously scarce inner lining of my stomach. At some point in my life, I never appreciated the seamlessness of a healthy breath of air creeping in and out of lungs with the surreptitious silence and grace of a mountain lion. As I lie bound by my misguided appetites, I yearn. My yearning is not for the physicality of healthy animal experiences; what I specifically yearn for is the opportunity to take breathing/walking/pulsing all for granted. I yearn for the opportunity to be an animal again; however, instead I am a struggling piece of remorse wrapped in a black bear pelt.

I would like to clarify that I am not ignorant about other members of the animal kingdom, and I do not assume my kind are the only beasts who have been tempted by the delicious ease and accessibility of human-born refuse. Even as I shiver in my defeated state, I see rodents and crows glibly claim the forgotten and congealed mozzarella residing on an unprotected pizza box. However, these creatures have settled into their niches with such aptitude that the humans will volley their fear and dismay over the tiny chirping/squeaking heads to ensure that it lands upon me.

I am not a rat.

I am not a crow.

I am something much larger...something more power...something to be feared.

I was deluded in thinking that I could model my lifestyle from the efficient workings of rodent paws. My delusions are no longer, and I can clearly see that I am a bear. Of course, I am not the majestic beast printed on "Visit British Columbia" pamphlets with which humans associate the title of "bear". Nor, am I the blood-flowing version of the snuggly, round-eared toys human cubs hold close to their warm faces at night. No, I am not the beautiful or the adorable. I am the cruel reality: broken, seeping blood away from the inside, bitter, disoriented, and laden with the horrible irony that I am still hungry.

Still hungry! How can that be? I have eaten. My downward spiral was centered entirely around gorging myself on toxically delectable morsels resting within waste containers. I feasted/gorged/banqueted until I forgot the colour of huckleberries...until I forgot the shape of mushrooms...

until I forgot the gratification of crunching an insect. I feasted until I could no longer recognize authentic food.

I feasted myself into the deepest oblivion of famine.

Belly full of aluminum. Throat full of glass. My blood no longer feels the need to confine itself to the boundaries of my body. A faint thread of crimson has liberated itself from the corner of my muzzle to acquaint itself with the dried droplets on my claws. My eyes lethargically roll toward the meeting between these blood globules, and I pondered with the faintest of curiosity whether this mingling between the bear blood from my mouth and the human blood on my claws would bubble into a horrific mess similar to what occurred when the entire bear (myself) meet with the entire human.

Yes, the blood on my claws is of human origin. Consequently, the dull brown flecks upon paws are responsible for the labels adhered upon me: “aggressive”, “dangerous wildlife”, and “problem bear”. However, I would not use any of these terms with sarcasm nor do I claim I should be exonerated from such labeling. I do feel dangerous, aggressive, and problematic. Why? Because, I have eaten without satiation for an incredibly long time now. I have been perpetually scratching an itch that has only become bloody, sore, and itchier. Thus, how can any sensible mind ask me to tolerate the presence of the pestering, whining, fluttering nuisance of humans when I am burdened with this curse of malnourishment and starvation? Humans: animals that abandon a trash can of edibles, allow other animals to feed on the edibles, watch as the animals feed on the most abhorrent, nutrient-poor materials, and then become livid with the animals that are starving themselves on these materials that were more or less offered to them. Sure...fine...I am now an aggressive animal. However, one must agree that humans too are aggressive animals, and their aggression is far more insidious than mine.

A human’s arm has been scratched by me. Aggression.

I am about to die from internal bleeding and/or starvation. Insidious aggression.

What makes the human’s aggression so insidious?

A bear has a sacred, intimate bond with their hunger from the moment the first gust of air touches the tenderest portions of their snout. We move, breath, and pulse entirely in synchronization with our appetites. Our existence is a scramble to meet the year's blubbery quota by our winter deadline. If we do not meet our deadlines, then we die.

Humans frequently tamper with the bear's intimate relationship with hunger. They tease bears with the illusion of nourishment by placing out odourous garbage, and the bear follows illusion like an oasis mirage in the desert. Humans allow bears...humans allowed me to believe I was filling my fat quota before winter denning. Humans allowed me to feed upon glass, metal, and plastic. Humans allowed me to starve and bleed. And, then humans blamed me when I no longer had the strength to participate in a cordial relationship with them (the sarcasm is definitely present this time). Insidious aggression.

Why am I divulging this epitaph before my inevitable conclusion? I am not expressing some metaphysical survival instinct by attempting to remain immortal through words. I am a fed bear, and I will die horribly as many of my kind do. However, I must throw these words out at any receiving ear because I am a mother so I experience love. And, as I bleed to cessation, I see my child...my future orphan...ambling in despair, confusion, and hunger toward an open garbage can.

I must throw these words out to any listening ear: please, pull that garbage can indoors. He is just a child.