The Bear Man by Timothy Treadwell

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Timothy Treadwell's Life, Recovery, and Commitment to Grizzly Bears

Timothy Treadwell, also known as "the bear man," was famous for the work he did in Alaska. He devoted his life to the grizzly bears that inhabited Katmai National Park. Treadwell's thirteen years of devotion and hard work gained him many supporters as well as critics.

Keeping in view his contemporary lifestyle, one tends to wonder about his history and the incidents that may have influenced him to change his life. As Treadwell took a single turn in his life, it raised the question of why and who exactly Treadwell was, and why he lived the way he lived. I believe Timothy was an actor more appropriately. He was a struggling actor who tried his best to make his mark in the television industry, but life had other plans for him. His failures led him to depression, which progressed to alcohol addiction and finally heroin addiction.

Psychologists are of the view that life gives very few people a second chance to reconstruct life. A near-fatal experience with a heroin overdose due to a struggling career turned his life around. It is stated that Treadwell had been fond of bears since he was thirteen, and after the overdose experience, his friend insisted he visit the bears. The day he saw the bears was the day he devoted his life to them. It could be explained that Treadwell was who he was because of the choices he made; as a person, he is who he is due to the choices he makes.

Timothy Treadwell was known for his bravery, and he called himself the eco-warrior. Once he knew what he wanted for his life, he moulded his lifestyle according to the aim of his life. His passion for the bears was so powerful that he, after detailed research, started living among them and started interacting with them. A social bond was created between bears and Treadwell, which was enough for him to keep himself surrounded by the bears for thirteen years until an unfamiliar bear attacked him and his girlfriend.

Werner Herzog, Public Criticism, and the Question

of Empathy

Werner Herzog directed a documentary on Treadwell's story. He argues that we should be empathetic even towards those we do not know. Herzog based his argument on the interviews he conducted, asking various questions of his confidants about the nature of Treadwell. The people close to him referred to him as a polite, humble, and gentle person. In an interview with Jan, although he (Jan) thought that Werner presented a more negative and crazier side of Treadwell, Werner said Treadwell was an average human just like him and me.

People are mostly used to criticizing Treadwell for the work he did, but it is a fact that they do not know the whole story. It is commonly seen that people are making judgments knowing only one side of the story while ignoring the fact of what a person is going through. Critics seem to know less about the battles a person is fighting in his or her everyday life and what his or her mental status is. Herzog had an idea about Treadwell's work, which led him to make an argument to prove his exceptional work.

People are well described by the people they mostly live with and their secret keepers. Therefore, the evidence that supported Treadwell was an interview with his confidant Wilcox, who said, "He was a real bear expert without a science degree who knew all about bears through his experiences." (Pompilio)

Education, Risk, and Competing Views of Treadwell's Work

Wilcox recalls that Treadwell was seen visiting the school and teaching students to love and respect nature, especially the wild. The students found him a magician who changed students' points of view about the wild. Werner Herzog quoted the same about him. He was a great speaker.

People, including park officials, mostly criticized him for putting animals' and people's lives at risk. Treadwell violated park rules, and he was responsible for the death of his girlfriend and many such events. People also thought that he was out of his mind, but Werner Herzog respected his devotion and conviction to the work Treadwell did. Moreover, loving the deadly and fierce animals, living with them and singing to them is surely not the work of a nut job, but it has some meaning.

Werner's argument was certainly that Treadwell deserved respect and appreciation rather than negative reviews or people calling him a nut job. In an article by Steve Rosen, he states that taking Treadwell's project was not an emotional or cerebral act, but it was the right kind of work, and he was clear about the project that he was the one going to direct it (Rosen). Rosen believed that Treadwell made the right decision.

Fear, Documentary Evidence, and Life Among Grizzlies

In an article in the book “Among Grizzlies: Living with Wild Bears in Alaska,” Treadwell was asked if he were scared that the bear might harm him, to which he replied they would never do that since they love him so much. These words are evidence of Treadwell’s love and affection towards grizzly bears, which led Werner to argue with others about his nature that he was a humble person rather than a mentally challenged one.

One thing that intrigued and fascinated Werner was his interview with Time magazine in which Treadwell said that he lives and gets on their level. He stated that he had to become as wild as bears in a brief time. Treadwell named the bears, and the bears responded when Treadwell called them. Werner also says that his room was full of candid close shots of bears and there was no place on the wall to put a picture of his own. These little, in this case horrifying and huge, gestures are supporting evidence that Treadwell had a fascinating personality. Treadwell’s few steps and moves led to certain risks and failures. Due to his devoted work, he was called the Bear’s Advocate, a famous tourist guide and a celebrity for the Discovery Channel. Through his work, he made his life meaningful, which, in fact, was the real reason for his taking a turn (Times).

This picture is one of the masterpieces of Treadwell’s work. It is reported that Treadwell made one hundred hours of footage and thousands of photos that show his true love for the grizzlies of Alaska.

Sacrifice, Meaning, and the Debate Over Destiny

The point here arises whether or not Treadwell deserves our empathy. Everyone is allowed to live his or her life according to his or her desires. Keeping his loved one out of danger, but in this case, Treadwell put his girlfriend Amie Huguenard and many other visitors at risk. He ended up losing Amie. It is the common perception that people who love you can do anything for you, but this phrase, in this case, took the life of Amie. It may prove that his passion for bears was not worth the risks he took.

Treadwell gave away his life to grizzlies to make his life meaningful and to help the wildlife creatures. He was able to achieve his task to some extent. It is worth mentioning here that he believed that grizzlies would not harm him and he succeeded in his work and belief. They did not accept another one. Treadwell’s work surely deserves appreciation, but as he willingly devoted his life to a cause, he does not deserve our empathy. Another thing that can be considered here is that even flawed people can teach us lessons. He was a man of his word who devoted his life to wild creatures and who left this world in 2003.

I believe in fate and destiny, and that destiny plays a significant role in life. Atheists usually believe

that fate and destiny are frequently used terms, but they do not play any part in making choices and making life. I have a firm belief that hard work pays off, but only to a certain extent. A simple example is that you worked as hard as possible in your exam, but you did not get the reward or marks you thought you would. You may not even get the marks you deserve. You can do your best, and by constant hard work and devotion, you finally achieve your aim, but destiny plays a significant role in moving towards your goal. If you think that some people may misguide you while you are so close to reaching your objective, then destiny plays its part and diverts you to the right path.

Belief, Personal Agency, and the Legacy of Treadwell's Story

Some people may argue that your hard work determines whether you get an A or B grade. Some people do not believe in destiny. I have been involved in an argument and debate that showed that people have different beliefs and once you mess up with their knowledge, they start pointing fingers at your beliefs. Nobody tolerates it when you point out flaws in their ideas or the beliefs you have held dear since your very existence. Your childhood concepts are as firm as a rock, and when somebody tries to oppose them, it is a matter of time before you lose your temperament, and the argument turns into a fight, which is not good for both parties.

One develops a firm belief when one's parents or guardians teach one. What people see in their surroundings is based on the facts. People base their lives on these beliefs and ideas, and reviewing them again could mean changing their lives.

I would conclude with the following words and take the example of Treadwell and Werner. Werner believed in the project that led to the history and present life of Timothy Treadwell. Treadwell believed in the grizzly bears of Alaska, and his belief was firm and strong enough to make him spend his life with them. In other words, he stuck to his belief. It is a matter of opinions and ideas that encourage you to do things that you feel are right. Sometimes things turn out well, and sometimes the decision turns out differently, but it does not mean that the person is mentally ill or crazy. It just means that he or she is a firm believer in his or her identity.

Works Cited

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