PHOTO BY NIGEL LAING

#6397
Dogwood
Cornus ‘Eddie’s White Wonder’
Behind the Jericho Park West Sign
49 16’ 18” N, -123 12’ 9” W

BEAT A PATH – ALL THE TREES

AN ARTIST PROJECT BY HOLLY SCHMIDT | BEATAPATH.CA/ALL-THE-TREES

EMAIL TO TREE #6397

Dear sweet tree, Dogwood, Cornus, #6397; whichever name you prefer,

Last week my classmates and I took a walk through your neighbourhood. During this walk we took the time to be attentive to you and your friends, seeing which one of them we connected to the most. I heard you were in need of some love, and I just wanted to let you know that I am too.

You were the first tree I saw, and despite your lack of attention, you were the one who I admired the most. Maybe it was the way your leaves hung so delicately, like virescent teardrops placed upon thin boughs. Or maybe it was how your trunk was covered with luscious moss. I have always been curious about how a tree would feel about its company. I can imagine it feels like growing body hair for us humans. We are not much different than you, you know? Even though many like to think we are. We show our features and traits in different forms, but we share similar senses and experiences, which are easy to be ignored. I have leaves, a trunk and branches, but they carry different names, are made with different materials that appear different to the eye and touch. My leaves change as the season move past, just as yours have as the weather has grown cold. As your pigments change from green to red, mine grows darker as the air gets frigid, and brighter as the sun shines down. Though my trunk is not nearly as strong and tall as yours, it keeps me balanced in the wind and stable through the storms. I have four branches that lead to small twigs, which I decorate routinely with different polish colours. I guess that’s my way of trying to equate to the beauty of your mass.

The point that I am trying to convey is we are related. Your features are recognized and functions are appreciated. I sensed your struggles, fears and emotions, but want you to know that you are not invisible. You are not just an object, a system of translation, or a type of decoration. You are as much of a human as I am a tree, and that is completely okay with me.

— ANONYMOUS

RESPONSE FROM TREE #6397

Thank you for writing. I’m afraid that I seem to be hiding in plain sight for most people. I appreciate that you took the time to notice.

Such a thoughtful message. I spent some time thinking about it and I agree that we share more than what might be obvious on the surface.

I am a tree, but I am also a community. From the moment I sprouted there was a connection between my newly forming roots to nearby mycelial threads. As I grew larger, caterpillars dined on my leaves and wove cocoons for their transformation. Lichen began to form on my branches in the winter dripping with rain and creating homes for new life. As I’ve acquired broken branches, cuts and scars, shelf fungus started to grow and consume my dead parts. Some of my companions are more enjoyable than others, but like a family, we get on with one another. We are something more together than we are apart.

Our relations with humans are more complicated. Some see us as objects or resources for the taking. Humans that recognize us in the way that you do, are needed more than ever. We share so much and our mutual survival and thriving depends on human recognition of this.

Your friend,
Holly Schmidt on behalf of Dogwood

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