

Bearly Waiting

By Sophia Wang

We spend day after day gazing out at the world from our dirt square alongside the Lake Oswego Public Library, forever frozen in time. They call us statues, bear statues. Back in 2013, when I was set in this spot with my 2 cubs, we couldn't have imagined that the people would take the actions they did to help our community. Now, we would be unsure of our survival if they didn't.

I remember seeing the cars driving past, puffing out foul gray smoke; leaving the stench of gasoline hanging in the air behind them. As time flew by, the forests were destroyed, and the temperatures gradually rose, with extreme rainstorms and droughts. Each winter, there was less and less snow, and the summers began getting



hotter, causing the sun's rays to pierce our bronze backs with light and heat. The deserted sidewalk next to us hadn't been walked on for what seemed like an eternity, and the grass surrounding us dried out in little patches, unusual for a city in a once humid region. As the leaves on the trees turned to shades of orange and yellow at the peak of autumn, we all worried for nature's life. When the first leaf fell, the fire in our souls followed; ebbing to a slight ember of hope. The trees' branches sagged and swayed in the wind as winter slowly approached. When the birds chirped, there was no longer laughter in their songs. Urgency was draped over the contaminated air, but the humans were oblivious to the rising tension. We were powerless of our desperate situation; only the citizens were able to help. If we were able to speak, we would've, but speech has escaped us, trapped into the roots of our creation. Instead, we wait.

After years of this stress, humans seem to finally come back to their senses. The old sidewalk by us, once abandoned, is now filled with bicycle and pedestrian traffic. The construction teams inserted new sidewalks into the land, and cars weren't seen as often. These

events happened so quickly that we, the bears, along with the trees and birds didn't know what had happened. Is everything going to change, after these years of reckless abuse? Through this joy and surprise, our minds were still full of doubt. Questions were all we could think of, so we watched.

As days, weeks, and months went by; we could sense the compelling will of the citizens. More and more the sidewalks were being used, and now, the old cars were gone. Out of the few cars we saw, they were quiet, and didn't give out black smoke. We were all substantially curious, wanting to know what these were, eventually finding out that they were powered by electricity. They planted trees, not frail, small, lone trees, but vast fields of them, their tender shoots poking through the dirt. The bleak grassy space before us was planted into a garden, and soon we were surrounded by elegant splashes of color that lasted into fall. We thought that it was over by now. Our city was robust, clean, and full of color, using new cars and fewer pollutants. Despite our guesses, this revolutionary movement was not yet complete.

We couldn't have imagined the next action the people took. Huge, black panels were set upon buildings and fields. We saw no apparent use of these giant devices, but the birds quickly relayed the message to us that they were natural power generators that worked with the aid of the sun's energy. I thought, what would happen if it rained? With a damp city like Lake Oswego, rain was inevitable. I didn't have to wait long to get my answer. Two days later, the answer was revealed. The rain started out as a slight drizzle, and quickly progressed to a heavy downpour. I watched the panels. Slowly, with a low buzzing sound, every panel on the buildings flipped over, revealing a nearly identical side. These, we would later learn, turned this water into energy to power the houses and cars.

Today, in 2050, people no longer walk by with their eyes glued to the screens of their mobile phones, driving cars that damaged our air. They walk and bike around, looking up to the actions their community took. Now, the people of Lake Oswego aren't just normal citizens, they are proud ones. The amazing changes they made, for themselves, our community, and the world, took time and effort to enact, but ultimately paid off in the end.

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