Testaments to Life

Elizabeth Gingerich
Testaments to Life

— ELIZABETH GINGERICH, JVBL Editor-in-Chief

The resilience of trees on full display
All while humans shift rotely from one lifecycle to the next;
Captivated by wonder and curiosity, inquiry and innocence in youth.
By midlife, hectic routines consume the day as obligations overwhelm and mere existence outpaces living.
In old age, appreciation and amazement reign, restoring the mysteries of yesteryear.
Statutory and erect, humbly bowing to the sun while cascades of color and beauty abound.

Testament that variety is to be respected.
No segregation needed — Oaks, maples, buckthorns, basswoods, hickories, elms, birches, cottonwoods, pines, willows

— each with their own mark,
— each contributing to the collective.

Companion to prairie grasses, they guard over marshlands, sheltering native species in symbiotic harmony with endless bogs and windswept dunes.

Supporting creeping vines like fanciful necklaces Competing for a spot in the sun Yet working together to sustain the forest.

Offering housing to woodland wanderers, Trunks with transfigured bases, impersonating whimsical creatures.

Swapping toxins for air, the next breath is assured To every living occupant, without recompense or attribution.

Tentacles crisscrossing to absorb moisture excesses while conveying sustenance to all within reach.

Reflecting the grandeur of one season ending by contrasting fall’s glories against pale, bare exteriors And hinting of a resplendent resurgence of new life to come.

Lining pathways, curved limbs outstretched to greet the passerby Heralding the entrance and witnessing the egress of all who journey through.

Standing tall in the marshland while radiating natural tapestries Replicating the imagery above to living portraits below Mirroring the surrounds and maintaining sentinel duties....
Even as death gives way…..

Lightning strikes and erosion, may fall a limb or even the whole.
Yet decline does not diminish camaraderie.
They lean and fall, but are aided by a neighboring colleague, to ease their demise.
Their usefulness is not spent.

As death encroaches and eventually prevails, more gifts are presented to humans and plants alike;
Stripped of foliage, inner rings are exposed to create new places to rest, to dine, to call home — all while enriching the earth with residue and hollowed shell.
So do not disregard the canopies of leaves, the nuts and berries, the shade and protection, all life-healing forces.
Honor these harbingers of hope and predicates of existence.
Reinstate the wonder and amazement of these keepers of time.
Give closer scrutiny to the winding pathways
The framing of bogs and marshlands
The regalement of solitude, only stirred by the hush of winds or interruption by the songbird.
From sprig to fallen timber
a sign of hope for humankind
even as humankind engages to compromise such Testaments to Life.

PostScript:
Aligning clean resources in the planet’s war against climate change — with the well-known attribute of CO₂ extraction by trees which has been leading the battle — university students worldwide are devising ways to aid in fostering a solution, instead of exacerbating the problem. Students at Michigan State University in Lansing have craftily designed a biodigester on campus which accepts dining hall food scraps, restaurant waste, and expired grocery items to convert into energy. Expanding this practice to create biofuels to ease the footprint of flying, 2 Valparaiso University students in NW Indiana – Amanda Wittersheim and Leo Cruz – have begun research in regional food and compost collection with the intent of integrating this waste into United Airlines transportation fleets.
Their research is ongoing.