

The Beauty of Simplicity- Living Like a Sandhill Crane

“There is beauty in simplicity.” –Unknown

Alison Famulare

I grew up with the sandhill cranes. Every year come springtime, for as long as I can remember, I squished my nose up to the car window to see if my beloved cranes had arrived from their long journey from the south into their summer residence- the pond next to my neighborhood. Occasionally, we would pull over and watch them stride peacefully around the marsh, their beauty overcoming and perfecting the murky, muddy environment that surrounded them. I remember sitting on the school bus with my neighborhood friends and we would all come together and name the two cranes that we grew up watching every springtime. One year their names were Bob and Betty, and the next year it would be something different. At that age, we hadn't realized that we had been watching the same two cranes, and if their time had come to fly into heaven, the generations after them.

A feeling of joy and excitement still fills me when I spot the pair of cranes for the first time, camouflaged in the cattails. Their long necks and sandy coloring allowed the cattails to be a perfect place to set up a nest for their offspring, as their protection and similar coloring kept predators' eyes away. This is what makes spotting them so exciting; it is a game which rewards you in finding the natural, peaceful, and elegant beauty of the red-crested cranes.

The red crest of the sandhill crane is astonishing, as the color red represents passion, desire, and love. These three feelings are very powerful, which goes against the tranquil, tender nature of the crane. That is what makes the crane so captivating. How can something so quiet and gentle in the midst of our chaotic environment carry a power within them that enlightens every place they go? It's the spread of their mighty wings that makes them seem godly, the red crest they wear high upon their heads like a crown on a king and queen, and it's their soft call that rings harmoniously through the valley symbolizing that spring and sun are finally here after a cold, harsh winter.

I grew up in a world that was always unstable, unpredictable, and never-ending. Since I was two, ongoing hardships within my family started to pile up on my tense, anxious shoulders like a ton of bricks, causing dark, gloomy days in which I see no hope in there ever being sun again. In these cloudy times, to escape this thought pattern, I listen to music, go on hikes, do hot

yoga, write in my journal, and surround myself with people I love. The purpose of these passions of mine is to overwhelm my being with peace, love, and joy until I can feel the warmth of the sun again. I want to resemble the all-powerful, yet tranquil spirit of the sandhill crane. Aweing at the sandhill cranes as they walk across the grassy fields and the murky swamps takes my thoughts to a place of tranquility. It's as if my heart is right there along with them as their long legs gently step into the soft, solid earth in front of them. Spotting them every year represents something in my life which I know is stable, rhythmic, and everlasting and guides me to realize that life isn't always as precarious as I have known it to be.

Sandhill cranes are quite simple creatures. They spend their days in their nests with their off-spring, wandering grass fields in search of earthworms and seeds for their meals, and soaring effortlessly in the grand blue sky. When I was little, I imagined I lived as simple of a life as the sandhill cranes. I was the colt, and my parents were protecting me in their woven nest. Now, as I am getting ready to leave the nest, I have realized how necessary it is to look at life as if it were as simple as one of a sandhill crane's. I must take my time in my nest, wandering the fields, and exploring the sky above me, for life is a gift and it is a thing to be valued. The second life gets crowded with hardships and thunderstorms, it is easy to forget the simplicities of what makes life so amazing and bewildering. Thanks to the sandhill cranes, each spring I am reminded of that.

While I gazed at them out of the window of the bus, or woke up to their morning calls or squinted my eyes to search for them in the forest of sand-colored cattails, they were teaching me a lesson about life that I never realized I was in the process of learning. I am so grateful that I grew up with the sandhill cranes.