

Here Is Where I Walk: Episodes From a Life in the Forest

Leslie Carol Roberts

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In Leslie Carol Roberts's pensive collection of environmentally-oriented essays, the author asks "what is a walk in a forest if not a chance to fully and deeply celebrate the sauntering and reflective mind?" Roberts's walking grounds are in San Francisco's Presidio park, set within her residential area.

On her walks, Roberts communes with nature and ponders many things. The book serves as a kind of journal of her perambulations, organized into twelve "episodes" or short essays, one for each of the twelve months of the year. Interspersed with the episodes are "notebooks"—looser, more intimate observations that expose her inner thoughts.

The book paints a sharp picture of the natural and historical aspects of the Presidio, which acts as a platform that inspires broader consideration of the environment. Roberts writes about coyotes and bees, species of trees, San Francisco's Baker Beach, the dunes along Lake Michigan, drawing nature pictures, and a visit to Australia. Somehow, these seemingly disparate subjects are artfully woven together against the backdrop of her local walks.

The book's descriptions are both poetic and informative: "a dusky jade shoulder of serpentinite with its mantle of foul soil is home to clarkia and manzanita, two endangered species." They are also sometimes spiritual, as with "So I walk and allow my brain to saunter. And if I am in the right mindset, I can almost feel another walking at my side."

There is a certain beauty and elegance in Roberts's words and the rhythm and cadence of her writing. All the while, her text exudes a deep love and respect for the world around her. Simply put, *Here Is Where I Walk* is a breath of fresh air.

BARRY SILVERSTEIN (May/June 2019)

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