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## Werner Herzog's Movie Grizzly Man: an Overview Of The Domestication Of Wild Animals

Humans and animals share a special relationship with one another. As the intelligent beings on earth, humans should have the responsibility to look after animals, especially those endangered. All animals, however, are not to be domesticated. In other words, not all animals need to be taken care of, like dogs and cats. In Werner Herzog's film, Grizzly Man, bear-lover Timothy Treadwell did not quite understand that grizzly bears should not be treated like domesticated animals. Because of Treadwell's constant willingness to anthropomorphize the bears, he and his girlfriend ended up being eaten by a grizzly bear. Treadwell's time with the bears before his death suggests that animals and humans were simply created differently. Humans have the ability to make rational decisions and feel emotions. Animals, especially wild ones like grizzly bears, have the main intention of surviving, something Treadwell found out the hard way. In Herzog's film, a theme that can be taken away is that nature is indifferent. No matter how close humans get to wild animals, they should be emotionally stable and be aware that they are flirting with disaster.

Timothy Treadwell may have fallen victim to a grizzly bear because he was most likely emotionally unstable. In his early life, Treadwell was a "normal, everyday kid" and "got along great with kids and animals," according to his parents. He was an aspiring actor, but his life "spiraled down" after he did not receive a part for the popular sitcom, "Cheers." After he failed at becoming an actor, he claimed to be an orphan from Australia because he did not want people to know his true identity. His ex-girlfriend, Jewel, told Herzog that the two of them would go to watch people get their prison sentence because it was "a reminder to Tim" to not end up in that position. He struggled greatly with drugs and alcohol, and according to his book, "Among Grizzlies," he suffered a near-fatal drug overdose (Dargis, 2005). Eventually, Treadwell discovered his passion for animals, especially bears, and claims that "I'm in love with my animal friends...I'm very, very troubled." To put a positive spin on Treadwell's life, the grizzly bears were seemingly a permanent solution to all of Tim's past troubles.

When Treadwell is in the wild, he sometimes gets very emotional and yells out random thoughts. One Alaskan summer, there was a severe drought, and he goes crazy in his tent yelling, "I want rain. I want, if there's a God, to kick some ass down here. Let's have some water! Jesus boy! Let's have some water! Christ man or Allah or Hindu floaty thing! Let's have some fucking water for these animals!" This scene is one of the several that depicts Treadwell as crazy, but very passionate about caring for the grizzly bears. It almost seems like his drug and alcohol addictions transferred into an animal addiction, which does not seem like that bad of an addiction to have. However, this so-called "animal addiction" led him to stay emotionally unstable and ended up costing him his life. Another scene that shows he is emotionally unfit is when he goes on a long rant about the park service and attacks individuals he previously worked with. Chuck Bartlebaugh, executive director of the Center for Wildlife Information, describes Treadwell as "irresponsible" (Owen, 2006). Bartlebaugh, who advised Treadwell on his conduct around wild bears, said, "Tim agreed with us and the superintendent of Katmai National Park to no longer approach, stress, or harass the bears. But he misled [us]." (Owen, 2006). This man was probably one of the many who Treadwell obliterated with "F-bombs" during the rant. This tirade proves that Treadwell is troubled and lacks stability in his life.

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However, he would most likely tell everyone that his stability comes from living with the grizzly bears.

One of the main ideas that Treadwell repeatedly failed to understand over the years is that nature is apathetic. In the film, Herzog says, "in all the faces of all the bears that Treadwell ever filmed, I discover no kinship, no understanding, no mercy. I see only the overwhelming indifference of nature. To me, there is no such thing as a secret world of the bears." Treadwell believed that he could connect with bears in a way that no other human being ever could. For many years, he lived and interacted with bears on a daily basis without doing major harm to himself. He was a "bear whisperer" so to speak. However, in the end, nature prevailed as he was consumed by a grizzly bear, the animal he loved so dearly.

While he clearly was a true protector of grizzly bears, his foolishness caught up to him, as he was naïve to the fact that these creatures are very dangerous. What is baffling about Treadwell is that he knew that these bears were dangerous, yet tried to take care of them anyway. In the film, he tells the audience, "If I show weakness, if I retreat, I may be hurt, I may be killed. I must hold my own if I'm gonna stay within this land." He is indifferent about the potential risks associated with grizzly bears, but nature flings its indifference right back at him. His bravery and willingness to connect with the grizzly bears is what ultimately leads to his demise.

Treadwell, although a true lover of bears, did not fully understand the basic mindset of bears. In *Grizzly Man*, he tells the camera at one point, "I will die for these animals, I will die for these animals, I will die for these animals." He full-well knew the risks of interacting with the grizzly bears, but one day he must have gotten too close to one that was probably very hungry and needed to survive. Treadwell throughout the movie proved to be a good-hearted man who just wanted to live with the bears to communicate and take care of them, but he was foolish to think that he would not eventually get eaten by one at some point. These animals are wild. According to New York Times writer Manohla Dargis, "his death, as inevitable as it was preventable, could mean that he may have been more lost than found." These bears will kill for food, and Treadwell ended dying helping the animals he loved. Treadwell was pretty much lost in humanity, and relied on the goodness of bears of to save him, but the inevitability of being eaten was too much too handle.

As a human being, Treadwell is vulnerable in the wilds of Alaska whether he can control that or not. A place like Alaska is no safe place for humans to interact with wilds animals, especially grizzly bears. While animals should be respected, they also should be given their own space, specifically wild animals. There is a reason why they are called wild animals. These animals are dangerous, and Treadwell knew what he was dealing with when he was living with the grizzly bears. For years, he talked to them, swam with them, attempted to pet them, and communicated with them in many ways. He thought he had these bears figured out to the point where the bears considered them one of their own. However, nature reared its ugly head of indifference and ended Treadwell's unique life. It is interesting to think the grizzly bears both saved and ended his life, but nature doesn't care about that.