



# Brandi Discovers 'Shrooms

A UCSC Student Adventure

Part 1



Brandi grew up in Malibu. She'd never been exposed to nature much, so when she was looking into which college to attend, she decided to go to UCSC . One day, on a hike with friends in the redwoods above campus, she discovered mushrooms..... A friend told her this might be a *Psathyrella*.



In fact, Brandi found she loved being in the woods so much, she climbed right up a redwood tree.



All that work made Brandi tired, so she sat down on a nearby stool. She quickly discovered that her “stool” was an *Amanita franchetii*. Beautiful, but not for eating.



The next day, when she was getting ready to sunbathe in the backyard, she found mushrooms there, too. “Wow,” she said, “mushrooms are everywhere.” She decided to join the local mushroom club and learn more. She found out this mushroom is a *Melanoleuca*, with ornamented spores.



On her first mushroom foray, Brandi discovered *Leucopaxillus albissimus*, a medium-sized to large decomposer of conifer debris. She got down on the ground to see if it had gills before she dug it out.



Brandi quickly learned how to extract the entire mushroom body. She read in *Mushrooms Demystified* (Arora, 1986) that *Leucopaxillus albissimus* is better kicked than picked, but she found out that wasn't so easy. This mushroom was soft and her foot got stuck.



Under an oak tree, an *Amanita velosa* stood tall in the duff. Brandi felt the soft patch of universal veil on the cap, and then carefully extracted the entire mushroom, so that all its identifying characteristics could be seen.

Her favorite find of the day was *Helvella acetabulum*, the brown ribbed elfin cup. It fit her hand like a baseball glove.





Brandi learned to use a microscope to help identify her mushrooms. At first, she was perplexed by clamp connections, but she quickly picked up the techniques, being a smart, young scientist.



The next week, she found the best mushroom of them all. A giant Amanita, that appeared to be made out of chocolate. She thought that was very interesting, like someone was playing a trick on her.

Brandi heard about state parks closing, so she went to the capital in Sacramento to convince lawmakers to find needed funding. She was disappointed that it was early Spring and that meant there were no fungi to be found on the lawn of the statehouse.





While she was there, she picked up a Save Our State Parks decal for her VW van.

To be continued....