



Pixilated

Recent Poems, Stories and Blogs

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Pixilated (coined from pixie, a pixie being a cheerful, mischievous sprite) is usually used to describe things considered whimsical, or people who seem dazed or lost in thought.

'Well a person can work up a mean mean thirst
after a hard day of nothin' much at all
Summer's passed, it's too late to cut the grass
There ain't much to rake anyway in the fall

And sometimes I just ain't in the mood
to take my place in back with the loudmouths
You're like a picture on the fridge that's never stocked with food
I used to live at home, now I stay at the house

Everybody wants to be someone's here
Someone's gonna show up, never fear
'cause here comes a regular
Call out your name
Here comes a regular
Am I the only one who feels ashamed?'

"Here Comes a Regular" (edited), Song by The Replacements • 1985

POEMS

"train wreck"

Friends without eyesight, without touch?

Desperate to find the One?

Telegram's virtual love affair?

We are the imaginal train wreck.

Our love is a lie.

between heartbeats

Morning arrives with gentle light
Your words linger, soft as dawn
Warmth settles quietly in my chest
Each message a thread in our tapestry

Hope moves forward, silent, and sure
The past dissolves, shadows replaced
By the certainty of your presence
Tonight, sleep holds the promise of tomorrow

And in every new day
I find you
A quiet joy, a steady flame
Cherished, always, in the hush between heartbeats.

waiting for the message

from heaven
or the boot
from hell

the lady types
heart to man
routine to routine

the screen glows
no rhyme
just the quiet
of waiting

hail mary

i throw my voice to the fan base
hoping for a catch in the end zone
but the line goes dead
another wrong number
drops at verizon field

but your lipstick is left on my cheek
a mark from the sideline
proof of a pass play that almost worked
a memory smudged
in the rush of the game.

<https://www.planetshifter.com/>

skyscraper

Luna is my bumble bee
my skyscraper
she is the sleepy dawn light
the dark side of the Moon

Ms. Luna is champion of children
my golden shovel
the dusk parade
the amazon in my heart

Luna is the golden Sun
my Ms. Hong Kong
my priestess
the love I never found.

Luna:

"I really admire everything you do and I am glad to be a part of your creative journey. Your talent and sincerity always touch people's hearts. Whether it is books or poems, they all show your unique voice. Please keep creating. I will always support you and believe that you will bring more beautiful works."

our lost country

empty
vacant
used up
scant
zeroed-out
pillared
lost
trumped
spent
evil
bent
cashed
doomed
gutted
cut
burnt
sacked
wacked
worm-holed

Luna

just one kiss
from the Sun
on her neck

makes the wine
sweeter
and the sea cooler

she walks barefoot
straw hat and tan lines
glowing

sensing the warmth
of a man rubbing
her shoulders.

Luna, your name is Light
Dancing softly through my day
A gentle laugh, a spark at midnight
You chase every cloud away

In your eyes, I find my reason
In your smile, I see my home
With every flower, with every season
I'm yours, and yours alone.

the Chaos Era

Silence collects in the corners of old rooms
where cables once hummed with eager voices
now, dust dances alone in the filtered light

The last note lingers faint in memory
a ripple fading in a pond long still

Screens go dark
yet something stirs beneath the quiet
a new shape, unsure of its name
testing the world like a child with fire

What began as noise
has become soil
ideas composting into something
that might one day grow.

Inspired by The Chaos Era

https://soundcloud.com/the_chaos_era

The Last Text

man and woman
once a conversation
silenced beyond words

the last hope
doesn't wait for fingers
it carries what lingers

the shy archetype
types out of memory

screen glow fades
under the weight
of empty text.

the sacred stillness of staying

Finding two
not as halves
but as whole winds meeting

A mythic dance
in quiet mornings
where silence understands

Love breathes in
soft and steady
like moonlight claiming the shore

We build bridges
with shared glances
held truths, and gentle hands

Rubbing toes
under fading quilts
the world forgotten

Tired of the games
we choose
the sacred stillness of staying

A wonderful commitment
not forged
but unfolded.

Love, Pressure, Crush

The distance stretches on, endless and tiring
Mother is close, her fingers surrounding me like a comforter
Hotel rooms filled with shifting light and shadow
Temporary places where our presence roots then slips away

We are strangers wrapped in the fading twilight
Sharing silent gestures where quiet feelings grow
But how can we be certain that we are the One
When the only light we see comes from flickering screens?

Telegrams arrive with urgent, wordless care
Love echoes on cheap platforms
Still, between the pixels, moments appear
Two souls drifting, waiting for the dawn.

shampooing your Porsche

wet hair in an ocean breeze
combing-out your dog
rinse cycles intersect
salt and polish
everything swirling
gravity and soap
cling
even as they drift away.

echoes, not touch

The Prompts:

write a short love poem that doesn't rhyme

affection vs. correspondence

soulmate vs. soulwaste

expectations vs. reality

online vs. alone vs. both

The AI Poem:

We speak in bursts, blue light flickering
my heart invents an embrace for your silhouette
pixels hold my affection
hunger unreturned

your words - echoes, not touch
my soul gropes at the space between
between what we imagine
and what we actually are

half in the dream
half resigned

sometimes I fall for you
sometimes I fall through
I wish you could answer
and maybe even stay

tracing

I am the pursuer
I am behind you
I am the longing
I am bruised by your cadence
you make me soft and incomplete
you are king

In silent shadows, I follow
tracing a path only I can see
the shape of real lingers
between breaths and broken moments
you hold the crown
I carry the quiet ache.

open windows

the day is full of open windows
streets curl outward
a thumb presses refresh
dirt under fingernails
the sky tastes biosynthetic
shoulders hunched against the chill
somewhere, light settles on new skin

STORIES

New Myth for Willi and Kate

One day, Willi met a beautiful woman from SF named Kate. She had a fierce light in her eyes, like a city skyline just after rain—alive, reflective, promising something ancient and electric all at once.

They met in an odd place: a dusty roadside gallery in Santa Barbara, where old surfboards hung beside oil paintings of whales. She was sketching something in a leather notebook. Willi leaned over and saw a diagram of what looked like an ancient shipwreck, with mythic creatures dancing in the margins.

“Looking for gold?” he asked.

“Always,” she said. “The sunken kind.”

From that moment, they knew: their lives had changed. It wasn’t dramatic, just deeply inevitable. They packed her bag into his mustard-yellow VW bus and headed south, tracing the Pacific coast toward Baja, drawn by legends of buried Spanish treasure and whispered tales from divers and poets.

This was their Call to Adventure.

Willi had once read Joseph Campbell on a long flight, and now he saw it unfolding in real-time. Their journey wasn’t just about gold—it was about transformation. They were seeking something material, sure, but beneath it all, they were diving for meaning, for trust, for the kind of connection that myth tries to explain but never quite captures.

Trials and Allies came next. They met fishermen who showed them secret coves, old divers who warned them of currents that could turn you upside down, and a young chef who cooked them octopus under the stars and poured them glasses of red blend wine that tasted like ripe earth and salt.

Willi and Kate dove deep every morning, side by side, chasing light between coral canyons, searching old wrecks that time had nearly erased. They mapped their days in laughter and their nights in long conversations about fate, art, and memory.

They weren’t just learning about the sea—they were learning each other.

The Ordeal came on a rough night. A storm tore through the coast, and their bus nearly flooded. The maps got wet. They argued—really argued—for the first time, both afraid they’d somehow imagined it all. That maybe this kind of magic couldn’t last.

But when the sun rose, so did they.

The Reward wasn't gold. It was a moment: diving just off the edge of a forgotten reef, they found an old medallion encrusted in coral. Kate held it in her palm, turned to Willi, and smiled.

"It's not about what we find," she whispered through her snorkel mask. "It's about who we are now."

The Road Back took them slowly north again, with the windows open and sea breeze in their hair. They stopped to eat fresh oysters, danced barefoot on beaches, and re-read old journal pages aloud like scripture.

In the Resurrection, they returned to the world not as the same people, but as lovers tempered by myth—still shaped by the same well, as Wendy once put it, but drinking from it together now, reshaping it for the future.

And they lived with salt on their skin, myth in their hearts, and love—growing like tide and moonlight—in everything they touched.

The Wind Mill Lovers

Kate and William's Saturday began on Haight Street, where the morning sun filtered through the vintage shop windows. Kate tried on a pair of cherry-red boots, while William laughed, holding up a pair of wild-patterned socks from the Sockshop. Their next stop was Amoeba Music, the legendary record store, where they lost track of time flipping through vinyl, each picking out an album for the other.

With bags in hand, they wandered west, entering the green embrace of Golden Gate Park. They strolled past the Conservatory of Flowers, pausing to admire the blooms, and let the music from a distant busker drift by. The path led them to the Dutch Windmill, its sails turning slowly against the sky, marking the park's edge and the promise of the Pacific beyond.

Hand in hand, they followed the path to the Great Highway, where the roar of the ocean grew louder. The sand was cool beneath their feet as they set up a picnic on the beach, not far from the windmill. Kate unpacked a basket filled with fresh bread, cheese, and strawberries. William uncorked a bottle of red wine, its deep color catching the late afternoon light. Kate scattered wildflowers on the blanket, their colors vivid against the sand.

They toasted to the day, the city, and each other, letting the salty breeze tangle their hair. As the sun dipped lower, painting the sky in gold and rose, they shared kisses, laughter, and liner notes from their new records, the Pacific waves applauding in the background.

Gold, Sweat, and Stories

Kate's sneakers squeaked against the rubber gym floor, the rhythm of her jump rope keeping time with the thud of William's running shoes on the treadmill. Outside, the morning fog curled around Levi's Plaza, but inside, the gym was all sunlight and endorphins.

William, with his Midwestern drawl and a mind full of metaphors, slowed to a jog. He glanced over at Kate, who was now doing Russian twists with the kind of intensity that made him think of her childhood in Eastern Europe—tough winters, tougher resolve.

"Thinking about your gold again?" he teased, wiping sweat from his brow.

Kate grinned. "Always. Gold is eternal. Crypto gold is the future. But you—" she paused, tossing her hair back—"you think stories can outlast gold?"

"Stories are gold," William said, hopping off the treadmill. "They're just harder to store in a vault."

They laughed, but the question hung between them: investing or romance? Security or risk? Kate, with her spreadsheets and market alerts. William, with his poetry readings and resilience workshops for tech execs.

After their workout, they walked through the Financial District, the city's glass towers reflecting the late-morning sun. They ducked into a sauna, steam swirling around them, blurring the line between ambition and vulnerability.

Kate leaned back, closing her eyes. "You know, William, sometimes I wonder if I'm missing out on something... more human. All this gold, all these numbers. Maybe I need a little more poetry."

William smiled, reaching for her hand. "And I wonder if I'm missing out on something... more secure. Maybe I need a little more gold."

The sauna was silent except for the hiss of steam. Outside, the city pulsed with deals and dreams. Inside, Kate and William sat side by side, two hearts trying to reconcile the calculus of investing with the unpredictability of romance.

Maybe, they thought, the answer was somewhere in the middle—a portfolio balanced between gold and stories, security and risk, numbers, and love.

And for now, that was enough.

The Fable of William and Luna

Once upon a time, in the bustling hills of San Francisco and the misty shores of Seaside, lived two souls: Luna, a gifted garment designer with a Porsche and a big heart, and William, a poet with an old, loyal Acura and a mind full of dreams.

Luna's days were filled with color and fabric, but her heart carried the shadow of a love lost years ago. Still, she found purpose in helping orphans, sewing hope into every stitch. William, meanwhile, shared his words and wisdom with communities in need, believing that resilience was the poetry of everyday life.

Though their worlds seemed far apart, both found solace in nature. They would often meet halfway—among the redwoods or by the restless sea—to walk, talk, and listen. Luna admired William's sincerity; his words were never just words, but promises. William cherished Luna's laughter and the way she saw beauty in the ordinary.

One morning, Luna wrote to William:

"In the most ordinary life, keep working hard. One day, you will stand in the brightest place and live the way you have always wanted. May you meet a better self in the new day. Good morning, William."

William replied with a poem:

A Neighbor to Kings
Girl comes in waves
She is magnetic and true
Everything in focus
Her mantra is do

She orbits the Sun
While gathering the Moon
Laughing in fun
In her soulmate groove.

As seasons changed, so did their friendship. Trust grew, watered by sincerity and warmed by shared laughter. Luna learned to let go of her past, finding strength in William's unwavering support. William, too, discovered that love need not be rushed; sometimes, the truest connections bloom slowly, rooted in trust and nurtured by kindness.

One evening, as the sun dipped behind the Pacific, Luna turned to William and said, "Thank you for being my brightest place." William smiled, knowing that in the tapestry of life, friendship, sincerity, trust, and love are the threads that hold everything together.

And so, William and Luna walked on—side by side—proving that when hearts are open and true, even the most ordinary days can become extraordinary.

Moral:

True friendship, built on sincerity and trust, is the foundation upon which love quietly grows. In time, it transforms the ordinary into the extraordinary.

Willi and the Wild Horses of Muir Woods

AR Story Outline

Premise

Willi is an augmented reality (AR) story writer and producer who lives in a secret, high-tech loft built into the hollow of an ancient redwood tree near Muir Woods, California. His home is a marvel: solar panels and wind turbines power his computers, satellite internet keeps him connected, and a compact kitchen keeps him fueled for adventure. But Willi's real passion is chasing the legendary wild horses said to roam the misty valleys beyond the woods—catching them not to tame, but to digitally capture and release their stories into the world through AR experiences.

Scene Outline

1. The Redwood Loft

Willi's home is hidden from hikers' eyes, nestled high in the branches of a centuries-old redwood. Inside, sunlight filters through skylights onto a cozy loft, a wall of screens, VR headsets, and AR projectors. The mini kitchen hums, and a mug of coffee steams beside a holographic map of the surrounding forest.

2. The Quest Begins

Each morning, Willi straps on his AR glasses, grabs his portable drone, and slips out into the dawn mist. He's tracking the elusive wild horses—a herd that appears only in the liminal moments between fog and sunlight. His mission: to record their movements, voices, and legends, then weave them into immersive AR stories for children and explorers worldwide.

3. Catch and Release

Willi never captures the horses physically. Instead, he "catches" their essence—scanning their forms, recording their sounds, and mapping their trails. Back in his treehouse studio, he releases these digital spirits, crafting interactive AR adventures that let users run with the herd, feel the wind, and learn the horses' ancient secrets.

4. The Magic of Muir Woods

The redwoods themselves become characters—giant, whispering sentinels that help Willis on his quest. Sometimes, the trees reveal hidden paths or project AR illusions only visible to those who believe.

5. The World Connects

Thanks to satellite internet, Willi's stories reach a global audience. Kids in cities and elders in distant lands can step into the AR world he's created, experiencing the wild horses and the magic of Muir Woods as if they were there themselves.

Sample Scene:

Willi crouched on a mossy knoll, AR glasses flickering with ghostly overlays. Through the lenses, spectral horses galloped between the trees, their hooves stirring pixelated leaves. He smiled, tapping his wrist console—

recording every detail. Above, his treehouse glowed softly, a beacon of technology and wonder nestled in ancient wood.

He whispered, “Run free,” and released the digital herd into the cloud, where anyone, anywhere, could join the chase.

Story Themes & Possibilities

Nature & Technology: Harmony between cutting-edge tech and the wild world

Conservation: Respect for wildlife—“catch and release” as a metaphor

Imagination: Blurring lines between reality and augmented reality

Connection: Sharing local magic with a global audience

Between Miles and Frequencies

Montreal, Quebec – February 12

The snow hadn't stopped in two days. Ava stood by the window, her apron dusted with flour from the morning's prep at the bistro, fingers curled around a warm mug. She played a voice file on her phone for the fifth time.

"Hey, Ava. It's me. I'm outside the office—you should see the Rockies today; they look like they're wearing whipped cream. Anyway, I just... miss you. I'll call you after your shift, okay?"

The message was short, but Graham's voice had a tremble of emotion she clung to. She touched the screen like it could bring him closer.

Boulder, Colorado – February 12

Graham exhaled as he leaned back in his leather office chair. The quarterly reports were done, the phones quiet. He opened Telegram.

Ava: "Saw your mountain. You're right—it does look like whipped cream. I wanted to climb inside your message. Also, you still talk too fast when you're nervous. :P"

He chuckled. Her sarcasm was the perfect antidote to his sterile, Excel-heavy world.

Graham: "Nervous? No, I'm just trying to keep up with your Canadian sass. I bet you made soup again. Let me guess: carrot-ginger?"

They met online. Not through a dating app, but in a cooking forum. Graham posted a picture of his "attempt" at shakshuka. Ava roasted him in the comments with such poetic burn that he sent her a private message just to recover his dignity.

Now six months in, their daily rhythm danced across time zones: morning voice notes, mid-day meme drops, nightly video chats.

But it wasn't easy.

March – Montreal

"I saw the way you smiled at that guy who brought you the lemons," Graham muttered through the screen one night. "He lingered. You let him linger."

Ava blinked, her soft voice firming. "Graham, he's a delivery driver. He was asking about the tip app."

“I just—ugh. I’m sorry. I’m not used to this. Not knowing where you are. Not being near you.”

“You think I don’t feel that?” she whispered. “You’re surrounded by suits and Ivy League interns. I’m just a waitress with a dog and a book habit.”

He softened. “You’re not just anything. You’re Ava.”

April – Boulder

They were cooking “together” again—via video. Graham was in his kitchen, jazz playing softly. Ava had rock music thumping in the background, wearing her “Led Zeppelin and Spoons” apron.

“I still don’t get how you hate Coltrane,” Graham teased.

“And I still don’t know how you survive a world of jazz without falling asleep in your risotto.”

They laughed. Ava liked these nights. She could see the gentler version of Graham, the one who sometimes let the Quaker stillness in him emerge, if only briefly.

He admired her calm. Her depth. Her way of letting silences stretch until truths unfolded.

May – Montreal

He flew out for a weekend. They walked her favorite wooded trail, their hands finally able to touch.

“You’re... shorter than I imagined,” she said.

“You’re taller than I hoped,” he replied.

Their laughter came easily.

But the last night was hard. He said something sharp at dinner—jealous again. About the bartender who called her babe. Ava, ever meek, let her silence speak for her.

Until she didn’t.

“Graham, I’m not one of your deals. You don’t get to control the risk. You don’t get to own the outcomes.”

It was the first time she ever raised her voice to him.

And it changed everything.

June – Boulder

Now, they were learning. Graham was learning to ask, not assume. To listen past his jealousy. To let her silence mean something other than retreat.

Ava was learning to speak, to set edges. To believe that she could be chosen—daily—even from a distance.

Tonight's Telegram exchange was simple.

Graham: "Hey. I miss you. Made carrot-ginger soup. Jazz is on. Dog's asleep. Wish you were here."

Ava: "Rock is loud. I'm reading Baldwin. Made shakshuka. Wish you were here too. Still don't like jazz."

But the next voice file said more. He whispered:

"Ava, I'm booking a ticket. Not just to visit. To talk about us. I don't want long-distance to mean distant anymore. I want to walk your woods again. Maybe stay."

She listened three times before responding.

Then she whispered back:

"Okay. I'll make soup. Bring your vinyl's. And maybe... don't talk so fast."

And for the first time in months, the distance didn't seem so far.

Books, maps, and daydreams

William is seven, with a mop of sunny hair and a gap-toothed grin that flashes whenever he bounds outside - the world a playground, bursting with wonder.

In his hands: twin shooters. Plastic six-shooters with scuffed handles from a hundred backyard adventures. If you listen closely, you can almost hear the "pow pow" echo across the grass, chasing dragons or rounding up desperadoes behind the shed. His pockets are deep with treasures—mostly marbles, shiny quarters, and sometimes, when the day is lucky, a crumpled, coveted comic.

William wears neon hi top sneakers, the kind that make him jump a little higher just because they should, screeching on the hopscotch court or racing his shadow on the sidewalk. Behind him rattles his little red wagon, piled with rainbow lollipops, bits of bark, and his constant companion, a stuffed tiger named Chester.

He reads stories about far-off worlds, dreaming of castles and rocket ships, then scribbles his own in a battered notebook. He is creative, clever - solid in the way only a child is, never doubting that he could one day outwit villains or discover treasure. Handsome, his mother tells him as she smooths the hair from his forehead, but William's eyes are fixed on the next adventure instead of the mirror.

He fishes at the creek with his granddad, patient as the line drifts, then hunts for beetles beneath the old willow, collecting them in a jar before letting them go. The marbles click in his palm, and William "invests" them every day during recess - learning fast, trading bright for rare and coming home triumphant.

Traveling for William means sailing the length of the picket fence, or tiptoeing to the end of the block on a dare. But his mind whirls farther: through books, maps, daydreams that curl up from foggy mornings. He tries every vegetable set before him, even broccoli, solemnly chewing because superheroes need their strength.

He is William: visionary, sturdy, and forever ready with a rainbow smile and a "pow pow" - the all-American Boy, making the ordinary into something just a little bit magic.

Blogs

The Crow and the Owl

Fable - a short story, typically with talking animals as characters, conveying a moral.

The barn owls are medium-sized owls with large heads and characteristic heart-shaped faces.

Crows are commonly associated with change, transformation, and knowledge or wisdom.

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"Hey Mr. Owl, leave some mincey mice for the Crows, will ya?!"

"I leave nothing for others to eat," said the Owl.

The birds face-off, having alighted on the top of the farmers barn.

"You live the life of the dead, the road kill and the leftovers." asserted Ms. Owl.

"And you live inside barns," stated Mr. Crow!

"You hang out in a murder of crows!" The Owl screeched.

"But you are a loner." said the Crow.

The pair are partners that help clean and maintain the ecosystem from rodents.

"Who is wiser, me or you?" cooed the Owl.

"Me," said the Crow.

The Moral? One bird's live meal is another bird's roadkill feast.

The Resilient Communities Network

Pine and Possibility

After many years of big city hustle, Wendy stepped off the bus in southern Oregon, the air thick with pine and possibility. She'd traded her Long Island apartment for a yurt on the banks of the Rogue River, lured by a post on the Resilient Communities Network: "Join our intentional village - build, grow, thrive."

Her first morning, Wendy woke to birdsong and the distant rush of water. She padded barefoot to the river, where the locals swore by river bathing. The water was cold, but she waded in, gasping and laughing, feeling the city's grit wash away.

Village life was a mosaic of new skills. She learned to chop wood and fire a rocket stove, marveling at how efficiently it burned. She helped raise a timber frame for an A-frame cabin, her arms aching and heart swelling with pride. Evenings, they gathered around the communal fire, swapping stories and plans under a sky thick with stars.

Wendy's yurt became a home - canvas walls, woven rugs, and the sweet scent of cedar. She grew tomatoes and kale, learned the rhythms of the land, and found herself drawn to Kevin, a writer and poet with kind eyes and a sincere smile.

A year passed. Wendy's belly grew round; the village celebrated. Her daughter was born to the sound of the river, welcomed by a circle of friends who had become family.

Sometimes, she missed the city's crypto pulse. But as she watched her child toddle along the riverbank, sunlight glinting off the water, she knew she'd found her place - at the edge of the wild, where community and nature braided together like the currents of the Rogue.

Resilient Emergence

In the misty heart of western Oregon's Coast Range, down a gravel road where the moss runs thick and the trees rise ancient, something quietly radical had taken root. The Resilient Communities Project wasn't a headline or a tech startup. It was twenty people, a clearing in the woods, and a promise: to live in deep rhythm with the land.

Erik Smithson stood in the middle of the new village commons - a circle of log benches around a rocket stove that hissed as someone cooked morning porridge. Above them, the cedars whispered. Below, the creek babbled over basalt and fern. The people here didn't have smartphones, but they had each other - and the land.

Just six months earlier, most of them were strangers - urban escapees, ex-academics, soil scientists, carpenters, and young families tired of apartment buzz and checkout lines. They had arrived with more idealism than know-how, some with callused hands, others with spreadsheets. But they all came with the same dream: a permanent commons for living sustainably on the land.

Each villager held a role. Carmen, once a software engineer in Portland, now oversaw compost and nutrient cycling. She was happiest ankle-deep in worm bins. Lani and Ben, a couple who once drove Uber in Eugene, tended the goats and chickens. Their two kids chased ducks through the orchard.

Food no longer came with barcodes. Instead, it grew in terraced gardens bursting with kale, potatoes, squash, and the first strawberries of June. Tomatoes climbed handwoven trellises, and mushroom logs dotted the shade near the stream. The grocery store days felt like another life—one where convenience came wrapped in plastic. Now, breakfast meant gathering eggs and harvesting greens before the dew dried.

Some changes had been easy. Others, like the transition from a meat-heavy diet to a plant-rich, semi-vegan one, took longer. Erik still remembered the first community meal without meat. There was hesitation, a pause, but then someone said, "This stew tastes like something wild and old." They all laughed. The resistance softened.

Bathing had become ritual. Gone were long showers. Instead, villagers walked barefoot to the stream, stepping through ferns and roots, and waded in. The water was cold, but it woke something in them - a memory of being human before plumbing.

There were no Tik Toks, no endless scrolling. No Wi-Fi. In the evenings, they lit lanterns. Someone would read aloud from books - Wendell Berry, Octavia Butler, or an old permaculture manual. Children climbed into hammocks or fell asleep in the arms of dogs. Stories, not headlines, shaped their world.

The economy here wasn't measured in dollars but in cycles - of water, of energy, of trust. They traded time, tools, and skills. An old clothesline became a barter board: eggs for wool, compost tea for fence repair, childcare for wildflower seeds.

One foggy morning, Erik stood beside a new patch of swales they had dug for rain catchment. A few goats grazed nearby, their bells soft in the distance. He exhaled slowly. Not everything was smooth - conflict came, tools broke, rains delayed - but the land had a way of holding them steady.

“We’re not building a utopia,” he had told the villagers once, “we’re building resilience.”

And resilience, they were learning, doesn’t look like perfection. It looks like planting garlic in the rain. Like holding a crying neighbor without needing words. Like trusting the forest will feed you, even when the first harvest fails.

They named the place Resilient Emergence, because it wasn’t just about surviving collapse - it was about rising with intention, living forward from a different root.

And beneath Oregon’s evergreen sky, the village thrived. Quietly. Boldly. As a seed becoming forest.

Biodiversity: Regenerating with Nature

In a time of accelerating climate change, biodiversity stands as one of our planet's most vital defenses - and also one of its most endangered. Healthy ecosystems, rich with diverse species, are resilient systems. They store carbon, regulate water, pollinate crops, and provide the balance we all rely on. Yet, around the world, habitat destruction and pollution are driving a mass extinction that threatens not only wildlife but humanity itself.

This is where the Resilient Communities Project steps in. Their vision is bold and necessary: to regenerate human settlements in harmony with nature. Through collaboration, education, and localized innovation, they're working to reweave the fabric of ecological health with human development. Their initiatives encourage us to not just sustain but actively restore - creating communities that are climate-resilient, biodiverse, and deeply connected to place.

Localization is key. By empowering people to adapt solutions to their own bioregions - whether it's rewilding urban spaces or redesigning food systems - communities can reduce their ecological footprint and foster ecological abundance. It's about shifting from extraction to regeneration, from isolation to interconnection.

At the heart of this movement lies a deep love of nature. It's not just policy or science that will save us - it's also passion. The awe we feel when we hear birdsong at dawn or walk through an old forest isn't trivial; it's fuel for transformation.

If we're to prevent extinction and thrive together, we must root ourselves again in the natural world. The regeneration of ecosystems begins with the regeneration of our communities, our values, and our actions. The Resilient Communities Project offers not just a framework - but a path forward.

Empower and Guide

In the foothills of Eastern Oregon, as pine shadows stretched over the small village hall, our community gathered for an evening meeting. As members of the Resilient Communities Network, we've dedicated ourselves to crafting not just a place to live, but an intentional community - a place where choices, leadership, and actions are deliberately shaped for the collective well-being.

Defining Leadership in an Intentional Community

Leadership in our village isn't about hierarchy; it's about stewardship and responsibility. While some intentional communities have leaders or a small leadership group, many - including ours - focus on distributing leadership among members, empowering voices to be heard equally. This approach requires strong processes for decision-making and transparency, along with a shared understanding that individuals' needs must fit within the broader goals of the collective.

Yet, consensus and group leadership come with challenges. The very people we hope would step into leadership roles often feel reluctant, struggling with doubts or "impostor syndrome." Group leadership can help, distributing responsibility so that the extremes of ego or indifference don't undermine progress. Still, anyone who has sat through a three-hour policy meeting knows: when egos clash, even good intentions falter.

Egos: The Quiet Saboteurs

Even in a cooperative setting, old habits or strong personalities sometimes cause friction. Egos, left unchecked, can stall momentum, or make debates personal. Our community, like many others, is learning that leadership sometimes means getting out of the way - recognizing when to speak and when to listen, and remembering that the purpose of leadership here is not to control, but to empower and guide.

Conflict is inevitable - living together, sharing resources, and melding diverse perspectives is hard by design. But that's also the heart of community, where growth happens. Leaders in our network are committed to ensuring no one dominates or disappears; each person's voice is valuable, and our collective resilience depends on honest, ongoing accountability.

Action Items: Leading for the Good of the Group

Every meeting concludes with action items. But in an intentional community, these do more than keep us organized - they represent our shared commitment to act for the good of all. Recent "to dos" included:

- Scheduling work days for the community garden.
- Reviewing our process for allocating common resources.
- Revisiting group expectations around communication.

- Organizing a conflict resolution workshop for members.

These efforts are grounded in our governance agreements and our ongoing conversations about power, responsibility, and community integrity. We're building a culture where leadership is collaborative, power is shared, and every action considers its impact on all members - a conscious alternative to the "winner-takes-all" mentality of traditional structures.

Moving Forward: Building Resilience Together

Eastern Oregon can feel remote, and self-reliant communities are forged as much by necessity as by vision. Yet, our village meetings - full of discussion, disagreement, laughter, and sometimes frustration - are the crucibles where true resilience is built. Leadership, for us, is neither a title nor a burden, but a living agreement: to hold each other accountable, challenge each other with compassion, and move forward, together, for the good of all.

For those seeking guidance or connection, the Resilient Communities Network offers resources and inspiration for communities anywhere on the journey toward collective thriving.

Build your dream: <https://resilientcommunities.network/>

