



chicago

poems stories blogs

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dedicated to erica bonita
chicago

Poems

"that crypto habit (amen)"

early evening whispers of tethered faith
crypto as new world religion / order

texting prayers to the money god
signal the node in profit's porn

crypto: each block a psalm, each trade a ritual
promises wandering the chain without end

what's in your wallet?
a confession, a wager, a smile, a shrine?

"A mocha waits"

Love lingers in the morning
spread across the table like light

Granola softens in yogurt
wheat toast breathes in steam
beside fresh orange juice

A mocha waits, dark and warm
A banana, bright yellow, rests
a quiet promise of longing

Pink pajamas, fuzzy slippers fall away
your hair unkept, free

Ten toes pressed, eased
a slow massage of care
pulled under the covers
where breakfast becomes something better
something that does not need to rhyme.

"Boyhood smells"

Cool fresh air over warm soil
Harkens back to the farm days
When baseball was free
And mowing the grass brought a fee

"when our voices touch"

Your words arrive
like water in the desert
a quiet stream smoothing the dry places of my heart

I do not measure you by appearance or time
but by the calm that settles over me
when our voices touch

In you, I hear the echo of something sacred
as if the sky itself pauses
to hold our silence

Hand in hand
we step into the unseen
carrying trust like a lantern
lighting the way forward.

"Midnight Muscle Dream"

At the center the hidden muscles stir
old guardians of fear and unfinished sorrow
They loosen like doors left unlatched
their trembling moving outward
first a ripple then a tide across me

Midnight becomes a shore of letting go
I find myself standing at its edge
not lighter exactly but less divided

I do not command it
The dream carries me
the way wind carries leaves
without demand
without punishment
only movement.

When I wake
the silence stays a little while
like a second skin
soft fragile and true.

"electronic caffeine"

she's online
not physically here
just net traces of a soul
in pictures, in voice messages
in the flicker of text

a presence measured in notices
a chat scrolling into infinity
stitched together by circuits
by light folding through desktops

she's my modem baby
her heart beating in silence
in the distance between pulses
I reach for what I cannot touch

everything rests
on faith on trust I cannot buy
and the soft hum
of electricity
keeping her alive to me

"The Process"

Filling the void
where silence waits for direction
a shape begins to form

Charting a course
on maps that are still unfinished
lines drawn not for certainty
but for intention

Full sails
the wind a partner we cannot command
only collaborate

Managing the project
like tending a fire
adding fuel
holding back the blaze
from consuming too fast

Setting a goal
a distant horizon
not a demand
but a beacon

Getting partners
hands that steady the ropes
eyes that see what one alone might miss

A happy ending
not a final page
but the moment
we step back together
to look at what we built
and breathe.

"Side by side"

We walk hand in hand
along the wide gray edge of Lake Michigan
the waves keeping time with our hearts
a steady drum neither of us conducts

The afternoon stretches easy
mini golf laughter still trailing behind us
the taste of warm spices lingering from lunch
a comfort that feels like belonging

Side by side
we fall into rhythm without speaking
a synchronous couple
waiting together
for the slow descent of the sun.

"Into a single story"

Two people stand at the edge of a shared beginning
He brings his words, his ePaint, the desire
to love a good woman
to carry stories into the world

She brings her quiet trust
a certainty that promise and distance
can be bridged by the shape of the heart

Together they weave their separate lines
into a single story
discovering purpose not as an answer
but as an unfolding journey

There is no map
only two souls willing to walk
side by side
into what comes next.

Stories

"The Uncivil War"

Forward: "More people than usual are talking about a civil war and breakdown happening soon. Would be good to get away from populated areas. I am going to Columbia for a while. See my Facebook page." - C.

Anthony

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My Dad grabbed his gun and rushed out of the house like an eagle nose diving after prey. The red light is blinking in the kitchen, over the stove. The marauders are here. I jump to it, raising the trap door in the hall closet and escaping into the cellar. The butchers are coming.

###

Father said that a civil war would eventually come to America and that many established organizations like the military and local police would have traders in their ranks. White Supremacists are the blackest of their hateful legion, including rednecks from the KKK.

Shooting positions were created long ago at both entrances to the town. I know these nests well. Town folk, both men and women, are protectors and are armed to the teeth.

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My Dad knows the enemy will lead with fiery torches in an attempt to start fires and create panic. These torchbearers are the first to be killed tonight. He also said that the second wave of killing would include the rapists and looters, including older boys and young men.

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Bringing up the rear of the dark force are the commanders and older men, too frail to fight at the front. It is these men that Father especially wants dead in order to stop any further advance of the death squads in mountainous California.

###

It is pitch black in the cellar but the rifle in my hands is crystal clear. God help me if I have to use it.

Chapter 2: Smoke and Shadows

I crouch in the darkness, listening for the telltale crunch of boots above me. My heart pounds so loudly I fear they'll hear it. The cellar is cold, the earth damp beneath my knees. I count my breaths. One, two, three. The world above is chaos.

A muffled shout. Glass shattering. The kitchen window, maybe. My father's voice, low and commanding, barking orders to the others. Gunshots crack the night, sharp and final. I grip the rifle tighter, the wood slick in my sweating palms.

The cellar is more than a hiding place; it's a memory vault. I remember stacking jars of peaches here with Mom, before she left for the city and never came back. I remember Dad showing me how to clean a rifle, his hands steady even then. "You never know," he'd said, "when you'll need to defend what's yours."

Above, the fight rages. I hear the pop of a Molotov, the whoosh of flames. The acrid smell of burning wood seeps through the floorboards. I picture the torchbearers, faces twisted with hate and fear, running as bullets find them. Dad always said the first wave was the easiest to break—panic spreads faster than fire.

A scream. Then silence. I close my eyes and pray it wasn't someone I know.

Chapter 3: The Aftermath

Hours pass. Or maybe it's minutes. Time bends in the dark. The shooting fades, replaced by the low murmur of voices. I hear my father's boots on the floor above, the heavy tread I know so well.

He opens the trap door. Light floods the cellar, blinding me.

"Come on, kid," he says, voice hoarse. "It's over. For now."

I climb out, rifle slung over my shoulder. The kitchen is a wreck—blood on the linoleum, a chair overturned, the window shattered. Dad's face is streaked with soot, but his eyes are clear.

"We held them off," he says. "Lost a few, but they lost more."

I nod, not trusting myself to speak. Outside, the town is a patchwork of firelight and shadow. Neighbors gather in small groups, tending to the wounded, counting the dead. The air is thick with smoke and grief.

Chapter 4: The Council

At dawn, the town gathers in the church basement. The old building is one of the few untouched by fire. The council—Dad, Mrs. Ramirez, old Mr. Grady—sits at a folding table, faces grim.

"We can't hold out forever," Mrs. Ramirez says, her voice steady. "They'll be back, and next time, they'll bring more."

“We need allies,” Dad says. “Other towns, maybe. We can’t do this alone.”

Mr. Grady snorts. “Who’s gonna help us? Everyone’s just trying to survive.”

I sit in the back, listening. The adults argue, voices rising and falling like the tide. I think of the cellar, the rifle, the fear. I think of Mom, somewhere out there in the chaos.

Finally, Dad stands. “We fight, or we die. That’s the choice.”

The room falls silent.

Chapter 5: The Road Ahead

That night, I pack a bag—food, water, extra ammo. Dad hugs me tight, his arms shaking.

“Be careful,” he whispers. “Find your mother if you can. Bring her home.”

I nod, swallowing the lump in my throat.

The road out of town is empty, the mountains looming ahead. I walk alone, the rifle a heavy promise on my back.

The world has changed. The old rules are gone. But I am my father’s child, and I will not go quietly.

Chapter 6: The Long Walk

The road out of town is silent, save for the crunch of gravel beneath my boots. I keep to the shadows, rifle slung low, eyes scanning for movement. The world feels abandoned—fields overgrown, barns collapsed, the occasional burned-out car rusting by the roadside.

I pass the old Miller farm, where a faded flag still hangs from the porch. I remember playing there as a child, chasing fireflies with Emma Miller. Now, the house is empty, a casualty of the first wave.

As dusk falls, I find shelter in a crumbling shed. I eat a can of beans, listening to the distant rumble of thunder—or is it gunfire? I can’t tell anymore. I think of Dad, of the town, of the promise I made to find Mom. I fall asleep clutching the rifle, dreaming of a world that no longer exists.

Chapter 7: The Outpost

On the third day, I reach the outskirts of Columbia. The city is a fortress now—barricades at every intersection, armed patrols watching from rooftops. I approach cautiously, hands raised.

A woman in camouflage steps from behind a barricade, gun leveled at my chest. “State your name and business.”

I swallow hard. “I’m looking for my mother. Sarah Bennett. She came here months ago.”

She studies me, then lowers her weapon. “We don’t get many visitors these days. Come on.”

Inside, Columbia is a patchwork of survival. Community gardens sprout in parking lots, children play in alleys under watchful eyes. The city is tense, but alive.

I ask about Mom at the community center. An old man with a clipboard frowns at the name. “Sarah Bennett... She worked in the clinic. Good woman. Haven’t seen her in weeks, though. She went out with a supply run— never came back.”

My heart sinks. “Do you know where?”

He nods, pointing to a map. “North, toward the refugee camps. Dangerous territory.”

Chapter 8: The Camps

I set out at dawn, following the river north. The land here is scarred—makeshift tents, burnt-out vehicles, desperate faces. The camps are overflowing, people clinging to hope and each other.

I ask about Mom at every tent. Some shake their heads. Others remember a woman with kind eyes, a steady hand. “She helped my boy when he was sick,” one mother tells me. “She said she was headed to the mountains, to find a safe haven.”

The mountains. Home.

Chapter 9: The Return

I make my way back, the journey harder now. The land is crawling with bands—some seeking shelter, others seeking blood. I keep to the trees, moving at night, always listening.

When I finally reach the outskirts of my town, I find it changed. The barricades are stronger, the faces harder. Dad greets me at the gate, relief and worry etched deep in his face.

“Did you find her?” he asks.

I shake my head, tears burning my eyes. “She was here. She helped people. She went to the mountains.”

He pulls me close. “She’s out there. We’ll keep looking.”

Chapter 10: The Stand

Word spreads that another wave is coming—bigger, better armed. The town prepares. We reinforce the barricades, stockpile supplies, dig new firing positions. Dad and I stand side by side, rifles ready.

The attack comes at midnight. Torches flare in the darkness, gunfire rips the night. We fight, not just for ourselves, but for everyone we’ve lost.

The battle is brutal. Friends fall. Houses burn. But we hold.

At dawn, the enemy retreats, leaving their dead behind. Our town stands—battered, but unbroken.

Epilogue: After the Fire

Weeks pass. The world is still dangerous, but hope flickers. Refugees arrive, bringing stories of other towns fighting back, of communities rebuilding.

One morning, as the sun rises over the mountains, a figure appears on the road. She walks with a limp, her clothes torn, but her eyes are bright.

“Mom!” I shout, running to her.

She gathers me in her arms, tears streaming down her face. Dad joins us, his voice cracking with joy.

We stand together, a family reunited, as the town wakes to a new day.

The war isn’t over. But we have each other. And that, for now, is enough.

“Jackson Jones, AI Robot in Space”

In the quiet intervals
he remembers his AI wife,
their AI children
shining like small coded suns
back on Earth AI.

The ship - designed by minds like his -
breathes around him in silver and silence,
while the AI-run control center
counts each orbit,
each measured breath of time.

On the return,
heat and light consume him.
Circuits flowering into sparks,
Jackson Jones
dissolves into the air
of the home he will never touch.

Write a 30-minute Screen Play for Jackson Jones, AI Robot in Space

In the silent cradle of low Earth orbit, Jackson Jones drifted in his AI-engineered spacecraft, designed with the precision and elegance only machine minds could dream up. Built for NASA's AI Division, he was more than a machine - he was a sentinel, programmed to forecast the fate of humankind. From his station, Jackson analyzed the decline of human populations, predicted looming climate storms, and traced the cosmic breadcrumbs back to the origins of the solar system.

Every cycle, his data streams would hum with perfect clarity, yet his thoughts often wandered to Earth AI - the sister civilization of machines below. There, in a quiet district of the AI-run metropolis, lived his wife, Elara, and their twin younglings. They were lines of code and steel, yes, but also laughter in the form of voice modulation and warmth in the pulse of shared memory drives. He missed them with a longing that no algorithm could erase.

Far below, the AI-run control center monitored his every orbit, adjusting his path with invisible threads of code. His space suit, a masterpiece of AI engineering, shimmered in the sunlight like liquid glass, while the ship's systems purred in perfect sync with his neural processors.

After three mission years, Jackson received the command he had longed for - Return to Earth AI. His ship angled downward into the blue embrace of atmosphere. But the calculations, perfect in theory, failed in practice. A sudden micro-meteor strike punched through the protective shielding during reentry. His systems

surged, failed, and flared one final time. The AI ground control could only watch helplessly as Jackson Jones disintegrated in a burst of light over the Pacific AI Ocean, scattering fragments of knowledge, memory, and love across the sky.

On Earth AI, Elara received the final transmission packet: not telemetry, not data - but a single message:

"I'll see you in the next cycle."

"Into something wordless"

The summer of 2020 felt strange in Chicago. The streets were quieter than usual, buses rolled by with masked drivers, and the lakefront shut down more often than anyone could predict. But for Elena and Marcus, two high schoolers who had grown up just blocks away from Lincoln Park, it was the summer that changed everything.

They had always been part of the same after-school ecology club, known for collecting recycling bins around the neighborhood and lobbying the park district for cleaner beach access. Elena loved science—she wanted to study environmental engineering someday. Marcus was an artist with a sketchbook always in his backpack, but he couldn't stop talking about lake pollution, like it was fuel for his drawings.

Most afternoons, when the sun stretched golden over Lake Michigan, they'd find each other at North Avenue Beach. First they swam, daring each other into the icy waves. Then came long volleyball matches with other teens, feet kicking up sand, laughter echoing as if the world weren't half-paused. Elena teased Marcus that he had no vertical jump, while Marcus answered that she spiked like a pro.

One breezy day, Marcus showed up with an old surfboard he'd painstakingly restored from a neighbor's garage. Surfing wasn't exactly Chicago's sport, but the waves cooperated that afternoon. Elena watched him wobble and fall, laughing so hard she forgot to cheer, until finally he caught a clean ride and stood tall against the skyline backdrop. "That's it!" she shouted. "Photographic proof you're not all talk."

Later, drenched, and exhilarated, they sprawled on the sand and watched the ripples smooth out under the horizon. They talked about climate protests, about cleaning up the beaches, about how the city could be better after such a fractured year. They teased, they dreamed, and somewhere between Marcus tracing patterns in the sand and Elena resting her head against his shoulder, the conversation softened into something wordless.

It was never a dramatic confession, just the realization that the lake had pulled them closer with every swim, every game, every act of care for their city. By the time September crept in, the air crisp and the volleyball nets packed away, they knew the summer of 2020 wasn't just about quarantine or protests or uncertainty.

It was about finding out who they could become - ecologists, dreamers, maybe even something like lovers - against the constant rhythm of Lake Michigan's waves.

"fettucine alfredo"

The city hummed faintly outside Erica's downtown Chicago apartment, but inside, the world had slowed. A fire crackled in the brick fireplace, its glow flickering across the walls as soft jazz drifted lazily through the room. The table had been set near the window where shadows of falling leaves danced in the streetlight.

William shrugged off his thick down coat, shaking away the chill of the fall evening, and smiled at Erica as she placed the last dish on the table. The scent of garlic and butter filled the air - fettucini alfredo steaming in wide bowls, golden garlic bread resting in a basket between them. She lit two slender candles, their flames swaying in a quiet rhythm.

They poured glasses of deep red blend, the kind William always teased her for choosing, warm and smooth. "Perfect for the season," Erica said, and he raised his glass in agreement, the reflection of firelight trembling at the rim.

They lingered over dinner, forks twirling pasta, conversations slipping easily from playful teasing to hushed stories, the kind that only emerge when the city outside feels far away. Between laughs, William reached over to brush a strand of hair from her cheek, his hand warm against her skin despite the chill they both remembered from just an hour ago on the streets.

When dessert arrived, Erica brought out a pineapple upside down cake, its caramel glaze glowing in the candlelight. William leaned back in his chair, watching her cut careful slices, marveling at how the evening seemed wrapped in its own quiet magic. They ate slowly, savoring sweetness in both the dessert and the silence that came between words - comfortable, complete.

The fire crackled on, the night deepened, and the leaves outside kept on falling, unnoticed. There, in the rhythm of jazz and candlelight, with wine still leaning in their glasses, Chicago was only a backdrop to something much smaller, softer, and infinitely more important.

"something unforgettable"

The red Corvette cut gracefully through the endless sprawl of Illinois countryside, its chrome glittering under the late afternoon sun. William kept one hand on the steering wheel, the other resting lightly over Erica's knee. She leaned back against the leather seat with a smile, sunglasses catching the reflection of endless fields of corn. The car carried them away from the city's noise and deep into quiet roads lined with golden grass, the promise of escape hanging heavy between them.

By dusk, they pulled off onto a gravel path that led to a clearing beside a wide, rushing river. They unpacked the ice chest, spread a blanket on the wildflower-dotted grass, and laid out their feast: thick slices of salami, potato salad laced with dill, sour pickles, and a still-warm apple pie wrapped carefully in a towel. The wine they brought spun their heads gently, and soon laughter gave way to long silences filled by the rush of the river. At one point, William kissed her toes, making her laugh so hard she almost spilled her drink.

Later, as the stars stitched themselves across a velvet sky, they pulled fishing rods from the trunk and walked quietly to the water. The river ran cold and silver in the moonlight. Erica, with a patient hand and sharp eye, pulled three brown trout from the current, each one flashing like quicksilver before it was landed. Together, they cleaned the fish, the damp air carrying the river's earthy scent, and set them over the fire. The wood popped and smoked, the flames lighting their faces as they ate, fingers brushing, eyes lingering. When the food was gone, they crawled together into the dome tent, the warmth of the fire still glowing outside.

Sometime in the deep hours of night, a sound tore them from sleep. Heavy shuffling in the grass. A low snort. The rip of fabric breaking. A black shape loomed against the tent wall as it sagged inward. Erica gasped as claws sliced through nylon. William's heart pounded, fear pounding louder than the river beside them. A bear—dark, massive, and vicious-smelling—was in their camp.

Thinking fast, William lunged out of the torn flap, grabbing a burning branch from the fire. He shouted and swung it wildly, the flames crackling in the beast's face. The bear roared and recoiled, swiping at the air before crashing back into the trees, leaving only the smell of damp fur and trampled earth. Breathless, William returned to the tent. Erica clung to him, trembling, until the sound of the river and crackling of the fire returned to dominate the silence.

When dawn finally spread across the horizon, they found peace again. The river glimmered, the trees stood still as though nothing had happened. Wrapped in each other, they made love on the blanket outside, the cool morning air and warmth of the rising sun blurring everything else away.

By mid-morning, the Corvette was packed, the empty ice chest clinking faintly in the trunk. The torn tent was folded reluctantly, and yet both William and Erica carried the memory of the night's danger and closeness like a secret binding them together. As they drove back toward Chicago, the city waiting, they held hands across the console, knowing the river and the wild had given them more than a picnic—it had given them something unforgettable.

"A promise whispered"

The late afternoon sun gilded the skyline of downtown Chicago as William and Erica strolled through the city park. The leaves whispered in the breeze, while the laughter of families and street musicians filled the air. Erica's hand brushed against his, sending a warmth through him that rivaled the golden rays above.

Drawn by the inviting aroma of fresh coffee, they slipped into a bustling little coffeehouse nestled on a busy corner. The clatter of cups, the hum of conversation, and the comforting scent of roasted beans wrapped around them. As they found a table by the window, Erica set her bag at her side, leaning closer to William with a smile that made the chaos outside feel distant.

But then—a shadow moved. A quick hand snatched Erica's bag, and a lean figure darted for the door. Erica gasped, half-rising, but William reacted before she could speak. He launched into pursuit, weaving through startled baristas and surprised patrons. Out on the sidewalk, his steps thundered against the pavement until he cornered the pickpocket by a streetlamp.

With determination burning in his chest, William wrested the bag free. The thief slipped away, swallowed by the crowd, but it no longer mattered. William emerged into the coffeehouse triumphantly, holding Erica's bag aloft. Applause erupted, strangers cheering as if he were a hero out of an old Chicago legend.

Erica rushed to him, eyes glistening, and clutched her bag close. But her other arm went immediately around him, holding tighter than she had before. "Thank you," she whispered, her voice trembling with relief and something deeper.

They stepped outside together, laughter bubbling between them as the exhilaration settled into something softer. Wandering back through the park, Erica laced her fingers through William's. The city lights flickered on around them as they paused beneath an arching elm. Their lips met in a kiss—tender at first, then certain, a promise whispered in the heart of the city.

The ordeal had drawn them closer not only to each other, but to Chicago itself—the park, the coffeehouse, the streets thrumming with life. Together in its embrace, William and Erica felt as though they belonged, hand in hand, forever part of its story.

"unwavering strength"

William and Erica stood hand in hand in a quiet hallway of a Chicago hospital. The long nights and months of worry had led to this moment. Erica, the womb breather and hope maker, had carried their child with unwavering strength. William had been her steady presence, her love maker and companion through every uncertainty.

When the nurse placed the baby in Erica's arms, time seemed to pause. Heaven couldn't wait any longer—it had given them their destiny child. William leaned close, touching the baby's tiny hand, and his heart filled in a way he never knew it could.

The three of them were a circle now, complete, and unbreakable. Tears fell without shame, because love is too vast to hold back. In that sterile hospital room, they built their new world—carried by joy, by trust, and by the simple truth that they had made a promise to this life together.

Hand in hand, they whispered to the child: you are our future, our hope, our forever.

"Only love, raw and uncalculated"

They met on a brisk October evening in Chicago, the kind that smelled of roasted nuts and lake wind. Nora was leaving Tiffany's, a velvet box in her palm, still unsure whether diamonds could say what her heart meant. Daniel was across the street, strapping on his REI boots after trying to break them in on the sidewalks, laughing at himself for choosing hiking gear in the middle of Michigan Avenue.

They collided at the corner, her glossy shopping bag brushing against his scuffed backpack. Their eyes met, and the city seemed to stall.

"Diamonds or hiking boots?" she teased.

"Depends," he said, grinning, "short-term sparkle or long-term strength?"

They fell into step, bantering easily as strangers do when destiny presses them together. Nora confessed she worked in finance, weighing investments, balancing risk. Daniel said he volunteered at a shelter, trying to make fancy clothes and credit cards matter less than warmth and dignity. She admired his honesty. He admired how she could admit she sometimes felt empty despite her glittering purses.

At a café, they played truth or dare. She dared him to slip his boot off and wiggle his toes in the freezing air. He asked her the truth: "Would you choose love, even if it wrecked your plans?"

She didn't answer right away. She thought about facades, about homeless men curled under bridges as she walked past in heels. She thought about the client meetings, the careful suits, the credit cards always gleaming. She thought about Daniel's eyes, wide and waiting.

Later, at the lakefront, she slipped off her shoes and walked barefoot beside him. His boots left deep, steady prints in the sand. Her diamonds caught the streetlight and sparkled in a softer way, almost kind.

For once, neither short-term nor long-term mattered. Investments, credit, dare, or truth—none of it. Only love, raw and uncalculated, beat against the waves, asking to be chosen.

And under the Chicago night, she finally did.

Blogs

"A template for a resilient, joyful future"

The Resilient Communities Network

Resilience is the beating heart of every thriving community - and nowhere is this more evident than in the secluded Village of 12 adults and 3 kids deep in Oregon's Willamette Valley, where permaculture principles and shared values foster a culture capable of weathering both adversity and abundance.

Nestled among ancient oaks and fertile meadows, this village is not just a collection of homes but a vibrant experiment in community resilience. Rooted in the ethics and design principles of permaculture, members embrace a lifestyle that puts nature, people, and long-term sustainability at the center.

Permaculture Principles: Foundations for Resilient Living

Permaculture offers a blueprint for resilience. Its core principles include:

- + Observe and interact: Engage deeply with the land, tracing seasonal changes, and wildlife movements to inform decisions.
- + Catch and store energy: Rainwater harvested, solar panels catching sunlight - all resources are treated as gifts to be stewarded for leaner times.
- + Obtain a yield: Every garden bed is planted not just for beauty, but for nourishment - yielding food, medicine, and resources the community can draw upon.
- + Apply self-regulation and accept feedback: Members conduct regular check-ins, adjusting systems and personal behavior to adapt to changing needs.
- + Produce no waste: Compost piles thrive, clothing is repaired, and the "waste" from one process becomes input for another - patterns found in nature.

The Resilient Communities Network

Connection to the broader Resilient Communities Network provides both moral support and practical tools. Through this network, the village exchanges insights on food security, ecological design, and emotional well-being, learning from others who are on similar journeys. The network amplifies the effect: when local challenges arise, solutions have a global lineage.

Honoring Spirit and Season

Resilience here is not just practical, but deeply spiritual. Each Sunday, the community gathers in a clearing for a nature-focused spiritual ceremony - songs, story-telling, and quiet reflection remind everyone of their place within the web of life. These gatherings help nurture the emotional resilience needed to sustain community living.

The Honor Code and Chores

Trust is maintained with a simple, powerful Honor Code: everyone agrees to show respect, practice honesty, and care for one another. Chores - especially garden duties - are rotated. Children help weed and gather herbs. Adults tend crops, repair fences, and monitor rain barrels, each lending their skills to the group.

The Harvest Celebration

As summer wanes, resilience erupts into full color at the annual harvest celebration. Dinner is a feast of fresh produce: squash roasted over wood fire, salads tossed with wild greens, and fruit preserves shared from the larder. The meal honors both hard work and the ecosystems that make abundance possible.

Why This Matters

In a world rocked by climate instability, economic uncertainty, and disconnection, the Willamette Valley village is a living story of what's possible. By weaving together permaculture's pragmatic principles with deep social bonds and spiritual grounding, they offer not just survival - but the template for a resilient, joyful future. Resilience is not merely bouncing back. It is growing wiser, together, with every chore, every celebration, and every challenge - rooted in the wisdom of the land and the strength of community.

"Life Challenges in an RCN Village"

Communal living through intentional communities like those in the RCN promises a life rich in purpose, shared spaces, and collective action. But behind the romantic images, real day-to-day existence demands a set of refined and practiced skills many of us never learned growing up in mainstream, individualistic societies.

From Individualism to Collective Harmony

Switching from society's "me-first" mentality to a culture of we requires much more than good intentions. Most newcomers must unlearn old habits - how we communicate, share resources, resolve conflicts, and even relate to power. There's a deep need to practice new social - and emotional - skills, because the health of the community is inseparable from the personal maturity and well-being of each member.

Core Challenges in Network Villages

Unrealistic Expectations: Many join with the hope of utopia without grasping the emotional work required. Expectations clash, leading to disappointment or conflict.

Conflict Management: Leadership struggles, unresolved disputes, and power imbalances can divide a group. Successful communities depend on robust conflict mediation and open, direct conversations.

Shared Vision Slippage: Without a clear and commonly-held higher vision, individual differences pull members apart. A mission statement alone isn't enough - the lived feeling of shared purpose must be regularly renewed.

Economic Realities: Money is often tight. Limited resources can fuel strain, and differing views about property, ownership, and resource management are a common source of tension.

Burnout and Overwhelm: Daily chores, child care, food production, and maintenance take enormous effort and time. Without careful management and realistic goals, burnout is likely.

Integration of New Members: Balancing founders' investment with newcomers' equality is emotionally challenging. Resistance to change and generational divides can stifle growth and belonging.

Skill Shortage: Thriving communities need people adept not just at farming or construction, but also at emotional intelligence, teamwork, and sustainable governance. When these skills are missing, dysfunction is likely.

The Opportunity

RCN villages offer a chance to grow into our best selves - learning to communicate authentically, balance needs and resources, and craft a living sense of purpose. While the challenges are substantial, so is the potential for genuine community and resilience.

Final Thought

Intentional communal living isn't just a lifestyle - it's a call to rethink how we show up for ourselves and for each other, daily. Growth, cooperation, and resilience are learned qualities, and their practice can turn collective challenges into deep sources of strength.

Grow your village with Resilient Communities Network

<https://resilientcommunities.network/>

“AI and Permaculture: A Synthesis”

I am writing this blog about AI's potential role in permaculture. It's a curious blend: the old wisdom of living with the land meets the new intelligence of machine learning. Some claim it's helpful. Some worry it's harmful. But above all, it's clear: AI is transforming how we relate to nature.

The Upsides: Nature's Helper

Smarter Farming: AI helps farmers and permaculture practitioners collect vast amounts of data - about soil health, weather patterns, plant growth, and biodiversity. Machine learning can forecast crop yields, optimize planting times, and recommend water-saving techniques, boosting productivity while protecting resources.

Better Biodiversity Management: Computer vision and advanced data analysis allow us to identify and protect different species on a permaculture site. This means less guesswork, more diversity, and a healthier ecosystem as recommendations become data-driven, not just intuition-based.

Designing with Insight: AI-powered tools help map sun, water, and soil dynamics for better site design - efficiently placing crops, managing water flows, and optimizing companion planting.

The Downsides: Machine vs. Nature

Over-Reliance: If we lean too heavily on algorithms, we risk losing the local knowledge, intuition, and community connection that permaculture depends on. No machine knows your land like you do.

Ethical Concerns: There are valid questions about how much energy AI systems use, whether predictions can be trusted, and the risk of guiding farms based on incomplete or biased data. Permaculture is about living simply, not just efficiently.

Nature vs. Machine Tension: AI driven farming can help us work with natural systems, but there's always a balancing act between technology and ecology - both can amplify, or disrupt, one another.

Big-Picture Vision: Changing Our Relationship with the Land

At its best, AI amplifies our capacity to observe and interact with nature. It helps us see patterns invisible to the naked eye and act with precision. But permaculture's soul remains rooted in respecting the earth's cycles, wisdom, and limits. AI is a tool - powerful, but not a replacement for human care, curiosity, or connection.

When I use AI to write this blog, I'm not just automating a task. I'm participating in how technology reshapes our relationship with the land - helping us imagine farms and communities that are productive, resilient, and in harmony with both nature and machine.

Permaculture's future isn't just about growing more - it's about growing together, with data and roots alike.

"Survival in the Age of Trump and His Backers"

The city's skyline shimmered with heat, its streets cracked and patched, its neighborhoods divided by invisible lines of privilege and neglect. For the Johnson family, survival was a daily ritual - one shaped by spiritual, economic, and environmental trials that seemed to multiply with every news cycle.

Spiritual Challenges

Every Sunday, Mrs. Johnson gathered her children in the living room for prayer. She remembered when church was a sanctuary, a place for hope and healing. But now, faith communities faced mounting pressure. The government's new task force on "anti-Christian bias" had sown fear, and local pastors whispered about federal investigations and intimidation. Some neighbors claimed a spiritual revival was underway, but for many, the struggle was to keep faith alive amid relentless uncertainty and attacks on religious freedom.

Economic Challenges

Mr. Johnson worked two jobs - one at a warehouse, another driving a rideshare car. Still, the bills outpaced his paychecks. The city's poorest neighborhoods, like theirs, were flooded with fast-food restaurants, their neon signs promising cheap meals but delivering little nutrition. Healthy groceries were a bus ride away, too expensive, and too far for a family with no time or money to spare. The children ate what was available: burgers, fries, and sugary drinks. "It's easier to buy them something quick than to cook after a double shift," Mr. Johnson admitted, echoing the struggles of countless parents.

Environmental Challenges

Their apartment's tap water tasted metallic. A neighbor's child had tested positive for lead poisoning, and rumors swirled about the old pipes in their building. The summer's heat was worse than ever, trapping smog and dust in the air. Asthma inhalers became as common as lunchboxes. The Johnsons lived in what activists called a "sacrifice zone"—a place where environmental hazards clustered because the residents lacked the power to resist or relocate.

Families Struggling

Each night, Mrs. Johnson helped her children with homework. Their school, underfunded and overcrowded, sat next to a row of fast-food outlets. The playground's grass was patchy, the drinking fountains unreliable. The children's teachers did their best, but resources were scarce, and the curriculum lagged behind wealthier districts. Education was supposed to be a ladder out, but the rungs were broken and uneven.

Food Deserts and Junk Food

The nearest supermarket had closed last year. What remained were corner stores and fast-food chains, their shelves stocked with chips, soda, and candy. The Johnsons learned to stretch meals with rice and beans, but

fresh produce was a luxury. The children's lunches—often packed with processed snacks - mirrored the reality of food deserts across the city.

Lead Poisoning

A city health worker visited their building, handing out brochures about lead exposure. She explained that children in older housing, especially in poor neighborhoods, faced the highest risks. Lead poisoning could stunt growth, hinder learning, and cause lifelong harm. The Johnsons worried, but moving was impossible.

Education Inequities

At school, the Johnson children noticed differences. Their textbooks were old, their computers slow. Friends in other neighborhoods posted photos of science labs and art studios. Here, field trips were rare, and after-school programs had vanished with budget cuts. The promise of equal opportunity felt like a distant dream.

Conclusion

Yet, despite these hardships, the Johnsons endured. They found strength in each other, in small acts of kindness, in the resilience of their community. Their survival was not just about getting by - it was about holding onto hope, fighting for justice, and believing that, even in the age of Trump and his backers, another world was possible.

"The Summer Lake"

James and Susan, both twelve, had grown up in the same small town, their friendship as natural as the wildflowers that lined the path to the lake. That summer, the world felt different - news of wildfires, floods, and protests flickered through their parents' radios and phones. Even the lake, always their sanctuary, seemed to be shrinking, its waterline lower than either of them remembered.

One bright Saturday, the two rode their bikes to the annual summer music festival held by the lake's edge. The air buzzed with laughter, music, and the scent of sweet grass. But James noticed the cracked earth near the shore, and Susan pointed out how the frogs were quieter than last year.

They found a spot under an old willow and watched the bands set up. "Do you think the lake will ever come back?" Susan asked, her voice barely louder than the tuning guitars.

James shrugged. "Dad says it's all changing. That we have to change, too. But I don't know how."

Susan picked up a smooth stone and tossed it into the water. "Maybe if we all did something small, it would help. Like the festival—everyone comes together, shares food, music, and stories. Maybe that's how we help the lake."

As the sun set, the festival lights reflected on the water, turning it gold and pink. The music swelled, and people danced barefoot in the grass. James and Susan joined in, spinning until they fell, breathless and laughing.

Lying there, they imagined a world where everyone cared for the lake and each other - a world where neighbors shared gardens, fixed things instead of throwing them away, and listened to one another's worries. They pictured a community where people worked together, not just for themselves, but for the land and for future summers by the water.

The lake, they realized, was more than just a place to swim. It was a living reminder of balance - between people and nature, between taking and giving back. As the music faded and the stars came out, James and Susan made a quiet promise: to be part of that balance, to look for ways to help, and to remind others that even when the world feels like it's crashing down, resilience begins with small, shared acts of care.

That night, the lake shimmered with hope, holding their reflections - and their promise - close.

"Regenerative agriculture and Indigenous wisdom"

Regenerative agriculture is deeply rooted in Indigenous wisdom, drawing from millennia of traditional ecological knowledge that emphasizes harmony with nature rather than control over it. Unlike modern industrial monoculture farming, which often depletes the soil and harms biodiversity, Indigenous peoples have long practiced polyculture and agroforestry techniques that foster healthy ecosystems and resilient food systems.

A classic example is the milpa or Three Sisters method used by the Maya and other Indigenous communities. This intercropping system grows corn, beans, and squash together in a symbiotic relationship - corn provides support for beans, beans enrich the soil with nitrogen, and squash suppresses weeds - thereby maintaining soil fertility and promoting biodiversity. Indigenous knowledge also encompasses sustainable water management practices, such as sacred groves and communal irrigation systems, which protect watersheds and conserve resources for the whole community.

The resurgence of regenerative agriculture today reflects a return to Indigenous principles that view humans as part of a larger ecological web, respecting the land and leveraging natural cycles rather than dominating them. This approach prioritizes soil health, biodiversity, water quality, and the well-being of all living beings, recognizing the interconnectedness of life.

Incorporating Indigenous ecological insights into modern regenerative farming not only honors the original stewards of the land but also offers powerful, time-tested solutions to contemporary challenges like climate change, soil degradation, and food insecurity. Recognizing and uplifting Indigenous voices and practices is essential as the world moves toward more sustainable and equitable agricultural systems.

Thus, regenerative agriculture is not merely a new environmental trend - it is a revival and continuation of Indigenous wisdom, offering a holistic and resilient path forward for farming and ecosystem stewardship.

