

hillside sunrise

robert wildwood

Printed in the USA

2022

rise:

season of energy and light
what do you be
holding her

hillside adventures:

new to duluth
a hillside dream of revolution
walking home in the ice rain
black bear at the top of the hill
the friday night fire

seasonal environment time:

the HHL Volga under Liberian Flag
the weekend is always
the walk home with gravity
hillside comes alive
are you alive

cosmic cosmos:

water sign

valerian tea time and the spirit

how to transmit loving kindness back in time

this burden will not be passed

(her name)

we are interconnected and we can feel that

generations of poets

health struggle wellness journey:

dont break

sunrise colors the night

walking home is not a burden

caffeine psychosis is a thing

we become what we do everyday

nutrition yes, movement yes, sleep yes

partner daughter family:
poppa poppa poppa!
poppa day
wanting friends
keep u safe
i will not miss the bus today
do trees dream
when a baby is born
log out at the end of the day

home:
reflecting on surviving
love now
bedrock foundation treasure chamber
does this make me happy
fifty
fire hydrant altruism

transition:
we are holding
i can talk!
you, me, the backyard
sidewalk snow magic
i did not dream i flew over everyone
cotton pajamas

rise

season of energy and light

today

we may

go to the beach

on the lake

a dog with a life vest

without a leash

the warm water

summer waves

trees become driftwood

mountains become rocks and

rocks become sand

sand becomes glass

bottle in hand

rowan berries red in august

marigolds orange attract monarchs

goldenrod blaze yellow for pollinators

tomatoes ripe the children grasp

sunny golds and red cherry

toddlers and tomatoes

sun has found the shade

world is warm

she wakes up

what do you be

doing doing doing

always a list, something always needing done

our culture does not value

being

“so what do you do?”

after meeting a stranger and exchanging names

the next question

i exist

i breathe in

i breathe out

i let go of doing and being controlled by

all the voices that tell me what to do and i strive to

be in the moment

not thinking about going or doing or

buying or shopping or building or eating or

anything

feel sun on skin

touching wild sky air

breeze on lake touching tickling

chickadees circling say hello

children playing street coming alive

feeling body ache, joy, suffering, love

be

holding her

she is sleepy

four months old

momma hands her to me

relaxed in the curtained room

fan blowing

two arms encircling

holding her

she moves to be comfortable

small cries, i have to cough - no dont!

i sway and a little jiggle so

her head bounces rocking to relax

and shhh in her ear

still comforting to hear this noise

like the underwater sound of the womb

heart beat of mother

blood surging in placenta

shhh

the sound of life, everything

baby is startled by the quiet

of our world

a little shhh is

more like it

and I know ive got it right

when she is sucking on her paci

and her body relaxes and

she lets go
legs limp arms limp head resting
on my shoulder heavy
i am holding her
asleep
now i dont want to lay her down
sometimes i just keep holding
interconnected
one

hillside adventure

new to duluth

the new community garden
one cubic yard compost
12 wheelbarrow loads
bottom of the hill to the top
turned into the old clay lumps
black soil now ready
red wriggling worms
new life
sky feathery white
thunder chickens
growing clouds roiling
a sudden rain
the open mic!
open window and
comfy couch
stack of storybooks
with pictures
new town and new library card
she said
welcome to duluth!
a strip of beach you can
sit your ass in the sand
green light flash the
airport at the end of minnesota

i could see it from the hill when the sun shone
through the forest fire smoke from canada

i poured sweat until soaked
drank halfa gallon water
shovel and rake
wheelbarrow
wheelbarrow x12
heart pounding
sweat
second week of june
a box of seeds, tubers, rhizomes
ache to go in this ground
tomorrow
we plant
i lay on the green grass
heart shaking my ribs
rhythm on the earth
earthworms listening
beat beat beat beat
beat beat
beat
beat
and the worms know
which way is up
when they go sideways
down

around
cookies and coffee
keep me up
unfinished kitchen
the door is a plastic curtain
moves with the wind
moving like lungs
crinkle every time
the atmosphere takes a breath
like glaciers melt and freeze
breathing over years over millions
heart beating faster
melting melting
miles of ice
moving
making way
the million year spring
in the quiet of midnight
refrigerator running desperately
the electric bulb to see this
furious glow
the seeds are in the grounds and
the stars are out
lights slow blink on red mountain antennae
like a cat saying i love you
a car load of partiers
rolls down 10th avenue

singing with rolled down windows and then
the city sleeps

a hillside dream of revolution

i was sitting in a large party of people
and then stood up
began to sing nyan cat
“meow meow meow meow”
and everyone began to
sing along perfectly
a chorus
all smiling
spontaneous joy
passionate uprising
we sang louder and louder
as more and more joined
then we stood up and
took to the streets.

walking home in ice rain

walking home

ice rain blown sideways like

sand blasting my face i

duck my head down thankful for a hat with a brim

i hear someone scream as a hard gust hits

they have no hat and no glasses

eyes closed against the stings

trying to reach their car in the lot

and i know i have made a good choice to

wear a hat with a brim and

to walk all the way home

uphill, legs burning

warm inside my skin

ice rain burning

it feels good to be alive

thank you life

black bear at the top of the hill

walking with henry on a leash
through the woods in chester park
climbing the trail to the top of the hill that
splits the watersheds for
miller creek
chester creek
we arrive at the newly blazed peak trail and
climb
halfway up i see movement
something off leash
solid black fur moving, thick and clumpy
never been brushed
rippling fat over muscle underneath
the sun hits the ass of it
a black/blue gleam sparkles on oily fur
the butt of the bear
exits the trail in
total silence
three hundred pound bear moving fast over twigs
and dry fall leaves
no sound
had i not been looking directly ahead
would never have seen
now what go back?
the most dangerous animal in these woods

is people
bear was running from us
we wait a respectful moment then
continue up the hill
singing a little melody because
bears in the fall are
getting ready to hibernate
hungry
and food does not sing
but i know bears do

the friday night fire

laughing because
we need to laugh
below zero is too cold to be warmed by a fire
wood changing to heat stimulates our brain
flashes of light and heat we remember
we remember
take us somewhere
remember when fire was all we had
getting deep
rabbits running on melting snow
smoke and darkness and
whiskey and wine
moderation is fun
here we are again friends
two years later a long pandemic we
all shared this
from a distance we were together
but not close
not touching ever
concealed
kept in the basement like a flower bulb
waiting for spring
it's here

season environment time

the HHL Volga under Liberian Flag

ship anchored outside the harbor
spinning on anchor

the HHL Volga

(Hansa Heavy Lift)

under Liberian Flag

operated by a German company

wind turbine blades

stacked on deck three high

a multicultural children's choral performance in

Leif Erickson park they sing

between rain clouds and

umbrellas go up

when sprinkles fall

the kids in the choral group laugh

as thunder rolls

treetops feel breeze and

the windmill blades on the ship catch it

the Volga spins

we are moved

the future is here

Ubuntu! Ubuntu!

i am because you are.

the weekend is always

i will be out the door in two minutes
the bus is already moving to meet me
down on the corner by the cenex gas station
racing on heavy wheels crossing the bridge
over chester creek

i will do my psoas stretches now
and be ready

for monday

bus card

face mask

i have everything i need

i am awake

i am aware

i am breathing

aspirations aligned

let's go

the walk home with gravity

sidewalks buried in snow
trusting my city to drive safe with
me in the street the
only place to walk
giant silver maple trunks
two people could barely touch their fingers
reaching from each side
crows and chickadees and woodpeckers
small homes shoulder to shoulder
you could open a window and
pass a bottle to your neighbor
old foundations stubborn gripping the hillside
everything in duluth has a little tilt
nodding towards that vast water below
retaining walls and liquor store signs
slowly falling over years
gravity loves a hillside
oh what fun to see cars on winter's first snow
racing downhill history forgotten sliding spinning
bouncing crashing
on the stroll home from work i see dog walkers
home from work people getting fresh air and
exercise
sidewalks lost to glaciers
best to walk in the street

it's expected, the street walkers
it is a city it is a small town it is
a small world
there are people living in duluth from
around the world
i have lived in different states
i have slept on two continents
i have taken the ferry from europe to asia
i have rode a freight train from east to west and
west to east and even minneapolis to nashville
watched a bobcat play with a fox
in the tall grass of summer
ive watched bears dashing in the woods
ive seen eyes staring at me from the darkness
and i stared back.

here on east eleventh street
the new carrier furnace turns on
quietly maintaining homeostasis
last days of winter
next week forecast above freezing
melting
the dream we have been planning for
camping beach picnics
planting gardens and laying in the grass
watching clouds and

jets and birds and helicopters land at the hospital
where i work
re-issue stingray stock lowrider bicycle sits ready
covered with a dust sheet in the basement shielded
from the harsh minnesota winter
ready to ride
with gravity

hillside comes alive

five more minutes of freedom
then its shave and scrubs and
winter coat and
out the door to
bus stop
birds alive in the cold march sky
duluth minnesota
the hillside comes alive inside
houses and cars
the sun is here over the lake
touching the ice radiant
sending the hole fishers and ice skaters
fleeing for shore the
dark blue line of open water
moving ever closer to shore
ice joining ice crashing
flowing into
spring

are you alive

this is the time i do not appreciate summer
blazing hot torment

always in the shade

my body runs hot

this is the time winter seems like

something we've been through

and don't have to go back

but there is the goldenrod blooming and

scatter of deciduous leaves on the path and

autumn tomatoes ripe on musky plant

here come tiny purple aster blooms and

milkweed pods replace luscious flowers

i don't hear baby birds anymore because

they have grown and flown

next spring they will be back to

have baby birds of their own

and i feel

that every moment alive

is sacred

cosmic cosmos

water sign

walking the trail down by chester creek i
slow and hear
the water call
follow a tiny path down to the pebble beach and
a hot summer swimming hole beckons
strip down sink in and soon
little fish are tickling my skin and
my body responds like
memory of the womb
when i emerge i am tingling and
reconnected to everything and myself
i find an old campfire
piece of charcoal
in hand
i draw upon the
smooth basalt rock face
ancient medium
in this public gallery
that is not for sale

do something new
every day.

valerian tea time and the spirit

i fixed the threshold
on the front door of the bakery
so we can roll in easy.
i fixed the wires
in the basement
so no one would get shocked.
i saw a massive crack
in a floor joist
under the carousel oven
i added that to the fix list
so no one would fall thru the floor.
i wrote down my hours
on the time sheet and
remembered
my grandpas funeral was today.

(minnesota is a long way from nebraska
grandpa, i know your spirit is already here)

i saw beautiful clouds over the lake
the north eastern sky
black rain underneath and
white roiling heads above
made golden by the sun
sliding slowly this way

fighting the contrary wind
then slowly pouring down
a rain from that single thunderhead
so that the sun shone thru
even as it still rained
a smiling rain
hopeful, confident
transparent
have no fear
the sun still shines
shooting rainbows
thru the multi-billion
droplets of water falling
 water from the body
 of my grandfather
 now ashes

fresh valerian flowers steeped in vodka
sealed in mason jars
six weeks for tincture
 the flowers have a milder effect
 the root is strong medicine
 taking the flowers off
 makes the root grow stronger

 some people are stimulated
 by valerian

some people are relaxed
and sleep profoundly
I make a tincture for the winter
when the flowers are gone.

i went for a walk
the night of grandpa's funeral
(100 years old. he was standing out by the road
when asked why he said
waiting for my ride.)
having a hard time i
picked a handful of valerian flowers for tea
down by chester creek
steeped and drank tea
slept hard and did not wake the entire night
when i woke it felt like
the first time i had ever moved like
reborn.

how to transmit loving kindness back in time

meditating after sunset

our guide asked that we focus on three people:

ourselves

another person

and a person who

it was difficult to think of

i thought of myself, my partner,

and then the difficult person:

myself in junior high school

hiding during lunch break out behind the

portable classrooms where

there were no bullies to hate me

i followed the meditation where it lead

as we sent loving kindness to that person

who was difficult to think about

i had a memory of me when i was

that junior high school student

in that memory i recalled receiving loving kindness

in a message from my future self who told me

Its gonna be alright

you will survive

you will get through this

keep going.

so here i am and there is no proving time travel

its all paradox
cosmic mystery life
where did we come from?
go far enough back and
nobody knows.
some people probably do know,
but there's no way to prove it.
i step out and see
full moon shining on lake superior
the night is quiet
i can hear the kale growing.
maybe i know.

this burden will not be passed

last night i purged old writings
a huge box full of it
cathartic expressions, struggles in life
childhood traumas merged with
lost and alone adult journals
darkness angst anger
today i took them to the backyard and
burned in the firepit
ground around white with snow
sky clear blue
flame dark orange and wild
burning my glove
emotion released
exhilaration and weight of years lifted
swirled around and rose to the sky
i remembered the joy of youth adventures and
 discovering new places and people
 love for life freedom spontaneous
action
i kept that and
let the smoke fly the rest away
i will never carry the weight of that paper again
replaced with just this one right here
i can carry this

(her name)

she was calling out my name
the days before she died
the nurse aides would call me
when they thought she was
passing

i knelt down next to her bed
put my left hand on her head and
my right hand holding her hand and
with each breath i sent
light through my body and
into hers
calming healing
“(her name)” i said close to her ear
she turned her head and spoke
communicating
feeling

“she’s still in there.”

“should we take a full set of vitals?”

i shrugged

dnr = do not resuscitate

a new nurse wondering

trying to think about what my professors said

about a patient on hospice

what my textbooks had about

someone who was dying
comfort for those who are leaving
“she’s dying.”
i shrugged
left to care for other people dying
or hanging on
like me
we all think about it
that someday
someone
may nurse the nurse
whose name will i speak as
breathing in i know i am breathing in and
breathing out i know i am breathing out

we are interconnected and we can feel that

russia invades ukraine today
bombs and bodies
women carry children running
fathers at the front line and
mothers at the front line and
grandmas carrying grandchildren running
glass breaks on the tile floor of
our kitchen in duluth
accidental
i grab our child and take her to safety
the dog is scared and runs
into the shards of glass
i am cursing
we talk later about the war
we can feel it here
in our home
something
something

later i am out with our daughter
three years old almost
birthday in a month
pandemic almost over
we can have a party with people? maybe
at the playground after a big snow

sound of jet engines in a sunny blue sky
two jets, an airliner with two contrails
another jet high up, four contrails, military?
i think about families playing in the park
hiroshima and nagasaki in 1945
the jet above disappears to the horizon i
imagine something falling
falling
flash of light

nothing happens
we are fortunate
in time and place
the fall is
not today

the interconnectedness of all people
vibrates the Earth
you cant feel it
you feel it
we are interdependent
resonating
we feel you
we need you alive

generations of poets

wash up on the shore
crashing down
moving sand
cliffs crumble slowly
magma bubbles rise
forming new islands
every generation
seeks the truth
and they find it
no way to explain
five billion separate truths
together
and generations of poets
waves hitting shore
crashing down
moving sand

health struggle
wellness journey

dont break

the new water heater is working
drug the steel body of the old one
up the basement stairs
out to the yard
left it in the snow
the rabbits will wonder tonight
while it lays cold
covered by a white sheet of
new snow

my daughter was confused
why was poppa in the basement all day
wondered if she broke the water heater
she's new here
she breaks a lot of things
"it was just old.
old things stop working
eventually. you didn't
break it."
almost three years old
and i am fifty
i thought about the calendar
i considered the clock
checked my list:
 movement

daily walk
relaxation
psoas stretch
yoga
gardening

nutrition

supplements
anti-oxidants
vegetables
strategic medication
prevent acid reflux
dont eat 2 hours before sleep
dont drink 30 minutes before sleep
eat smaller more frequent meals

sleep

drink chamomile tea
induce restful sleep
plan on 8 hours minimum
no screen time before bed
no doom scrolling

joy

mindfulness
social engagement
stress reduction
massage
keep the synapses firing
blood flowing

reach out out out
dont break

sunrise colors the night

fifteen minutes before i should be in bed
tomorrow i

wake up with the sun catch the bus at six
my first day of work at a reasonable place

i am drinking chamomile tea

bring on restful sleep

i am a night owl still

trying to become a morning person

but the night-

ah!

so quiet and

full of potential

me and freedom

a light in the dark

timeless moment unending always present

a place alone to contemplate

eight hours of sleep

minimum

so this is it

tomorrow is the first day

of the future

goodnight

walking home is not a burden

walking is preventative health care
stimulating body and mind
slow walking past old trees that
in a car or bus go by in a blur but
i am walking and i see their trunks and
i see the bark, wounds in the wood from years
i hear birds on their branches i
am walking like we have always walked like
we walked out of east african rift valleys to
roam the world
nothing against the bus, cars, they
are for those who cannot walk

caffeine psychosis is a thing

i was drinking green tea
a whole handful of dry gunpowder
green tea
slamming a teapot in the morning
like i was trying to escape Earth's gravity
a solid rocket booster of caffeine
it caused problems

now i drink 1 measured tablespoon
dramatic decrease in
anxiety
paranoia
anger
frustration
and a dramatic increase in
peacefulness
happiness
calm
joy

wow.

i can now regulate my emotions
like an adult
when i get upset
i can communicate
without letting my emotions take over

when i was young i used to drink
endless coffee
bottomless coffee
refill after refill
all-u-can drink coffee
pot after pot of coffee and
run out into the streets with my friends to
destroy everything
overcaffeinated white people
a destructive force in the world
total inability to chill and
listen and love
we in the west are a pack of consumers
more is always better
but if it causes psychosis
harsh words and communication failure
road rage
violence
then less is more.

i finally saw the pattern
made the connection
high caffeine consumption + stress = system failure
emotions on fire
i decide to
wake up with other things

exercise
drink water
breathe fresh air
meditate
stretch
hot shower
dance

caffeine is powerful
caffeine is a drug
what i did when i was young is
no longer tolerated by my body
my body said stop
ive had enough
one cup a day.

this morning i had my tea at the house and
now at the cafe an empty mug
that once held coffee
mmm that was good
let the free refill go
let it go
breathe
no fighting
breathe

we become what we do everyday

i believe it's true and
want to remember this
every time i get mad and start cussing
is that who i want to be? because
that is who i am being.
if a person fills their heart with hate it
doesn't matter how justified and righteous
if you practice hate then you are hate and
you will not be happy
that is not who i want to be
when i am offered a chance to be pissed and
holler and rage with boiled blood
it's not about them it's about me and
i have decided
i don't want to be that
hatred is bad for the body you can measure it
with scientific instruments
for my health and well being and longevity
i will invite them to the table i am
not going to push them away
get closer to what i am afraid of
pushing away is easy i
challenge myself to
empathic approach
all people even billionaires and bosses the

white supremacists and assorted villains because
it's easy for me to say but damn i know
hating doesn't help

anger is a good warning sign that
something is wrong
express it appropriately
unexpressed anger goes bad
turns into hate
dont bottle that brew

we become what we do every day
we guide our body to being every day
am i going to give every thought to hate?
i don't like the way people look who have
lived a life cultivating hate
the effects on their body in old age and
the pain on their face from
the choice they have made because
no one showed them options
to hate or to love
find a way
it's not them it's you
the power is yours find a way to
love yourself and everyone else
you can build a wall or you can build a bigger table
the choice is yours

i am fortunate to have this choice
and be supported
thank you to everyone who
helped me arrive here.

“I am here. I am home.” – Thich Nhat Hanh

nutrition yes, sleep yes, movement yes

putting the pieces together
emotional regulation and
nutrition, sleep, movement
the pillars of wellness

ive cared for my
nutrition

mind

skin

emotions

exercise

i need a day job for better sleep and

be on schedule with my family

i need better social connections

in this city of 100,000

so many possibilities but

now with a daughter it becomes urgent

to be friends with other parents

because they understand

the needs of kids and parents and

kids like kids so

put them together

and then have fun adult time

except we are still in air borne viral

pandemic

and need to be outside

to diffuse the virus possibly
emitting from our lungs
january in minnesota
outside opportunity lacking
patience find other ways

putting pieces together
i will be fifty-one years old this year
never stop putting pieces together
if a person
decides they are done
growing
learning
making new friends
then you are declining
on life support
just waiting

i will continue.
who i once was
is not who i am now
who i will be
is not who i am now
tomorrow
i will be new.

partner daughter family

poppa poppa poppa!

chair sitting on concrete smoothed over bedrock
i hear henry's claws on the wood floor above
i have established a typewriter post
on the very bottom floor
where the sound will not wake my daughter
but now i hear her feet too and she jump jump
jumps across the floor like a frog
improving the skill
she hops toward the sound of my letters
hitting paper tap tap tap
(smith corona)
her voice down the basement stairs
"poppa poppa poppa!"
gate at the top keeps her but soon
she will know how to unlock a slide bolt
she will find me and
request my attention
even now the lock cannot hold her voice
request becomes demand
it is her job to learn and
i am doing something new
time to teach
i go when she calls
we are friends we love each other

poppa day

today is thursday my favorite day
poppa day
yes it is good to have time off work but
the best thing is
i get to take my daughter to
early childhood family education class
we play together
she plays with other kids
the parents go to an adjacent room
talk about parenting
the kids learn to deal with being separated from us
getting them ready for preschool
they eat a snack together
then we reunite and sing songs.
it's so cool.
when the parents return
the kids are all sitting at their table
eating snack, cheddar goldfish crackers
today my daughter saw me and shouted
poppa!
eight kids all continued munching their snacks
then she surveys the mommas returning and says,
all the mommas came back!
she is aware, mindful
i listen for every word she says

i strive to appreciate this time we have
in school together
someday she will be in school on her own
and i know that is going to be hard on all of us
and also good because alone time is good
and momma and poppa will spend it thinking about
her but
eventually we will relax

wanting friends

a long pandemic of learning
adults and kids all new to this
our children hit the sidewalk
run to their neighborhood playmates
our arms encircle and
we hold them back
explain the dynamics of
an airborne virus
lofted by the lungs
while they frown and cry
wanting friends

first a game
the older kids were taught and maintained 6 feet
social distance
the little kids don't understand
so they follow the older kids
who try to measure space
now the older kids must run away
to avoid breaking the rules and
everyone is playing chase
those too young to understand
are always "it"
the little ones are still chasing friends

we dream of the day
when the streets will no longer be littered
with surgical masks

our daughter loves her toy medical bag
she gives anyone laying on the couch
a full head to toe examination
a relaxing game
born into pandemic
growing up learning science
medicine
public health
how to help other people
how to keep people safe

i dream of a world that
makes her smile

keep u safe

far into the future
my mind time travels
forward and back
i can go anywhere
remember tomorrow
like it was yesterday
meditate, let it go, all the way
i arrive back in
the moment
the garden
smelling white pine tree needles dry on the ground
pulling tansy and grass from the vegetable bed
eat a sunny gold tomato
admire the pumpkins
inhale marigold
water the greens
my daughter is sleeping now
Sonja will go to the errands
i will stay with the dreaming child
mamma and pappa keep you safe
henry keeps you safe
lala keeps you safe
many people keep you safe

i will not miss the bus today

i have a plan

i set an alarm

i am a genius

i will not be distracted by big emotions

toddler priorities

like coloring

and puzzles

i will get to work on time

it's okay that yesterday

i did not

a walk is good for you

but not when

late

i will not miss the bus today

i will say goodbye and

run

do trees dream

the knife reveals the grain on the buckthorn
a spoon i am carving for my daughter to eat
home made applesauce
flax oil rubbed in with hand on the grain
releases memories from each ring in the wood
15, 16, 17, 18 rings, this tree began growing when
our neighbor's children were born and
they ran around these woods while
this tree was the woods and the tree
felt everything
eighteen years of seasons recorded
in this wood

i sleep this night
wild dreams
feelings from the tree freed
like a magic lamp polished awake as
returning from a long journey or an all night party
a little sore and awed by the distance travelled and
happy to see my four month old baby and
wife sleeping next to me then
enjoying the morning sunlight as we rise
in our cozy home

later when Sonja goes to work my daughter and i

will walk in those woods
surrounded by relatives of her spoon and
trees will watch and listen and feel and smell us
passing through their world
their children sprout below our feet
do trees dream of us?

when a baby is born

our hands and arms
replace the womb
mothers milk replaces
the placenta that
nourished baby for months
the direct love of many
adds to the
singular love of mother
when baby is upset
we swaddle a blanket and wrap our
hands around her and say
shhh
gently reminding her
of mothers energy vibrating
sound of blood flow
in the womb
comforting
shhh

we continue communicating
with her, as we have
since she was able
to receive
we explain what is
going on so she knows

she can feel it
you can see this in her
face and eyes. we ask for
consent before doing any
thing with her, because
people like being recognized
people must be respected.
“im going to pick you up now, okay?
im going to change your diaper now,
okay? Because I know
you like a dry diaper.”
Starting out with mutual respect
we expect to be respected in return
Starting this way,
we will not come to a day
and say, “Our child is
old enough to respect now.”
We begin in
mutual respect and
continue forever.

log out at the end of the day

at the end of the day

my daughter and Sonja are in bed

the dishes have been washed

things have been put away

the trash taken out

a lunch packed in the fridge

a set of dark blue scrubs set out

for another day of work tomorrow

and then the weekend is ours

everything going according to plan

life happening to us while we plan it

organizing what is important

not enough time to do it all

hold something to see how it makes you feel

does it spark joy in you?

i held my daughter a lot today

she needed reassurance and support

i don't recall having experiences with constipation

it looks unpleasant

the struggle became a family event

even the dog was checking in

then after dinner five minutes before bedtime

the biggest turd pushed out and she said

it came out

we all clapped

it was a long day
ive never felt so happy to see a turd
i said, look at that
she said, wow
i took that thing out to the alley and
put it in the trash
pushed it out of the house
so we could sleep in peace amen

home

reflecting on surviving

sleeping on cold concrete
sleeping on cold steel
sleeping on dirty linoleum
sleeping on dirt.
sleeping but not sleeping
surviving the night
fear wakes up
exhaustion closes eyes
wishing

is this what i have chosen
did i realize what this would be like
having never been here
an experience of being homeless
or also
free
its not all bad
just mostly
for me
empty wallet
white and privileged but
still in the hole
no light
come on come on
synapses firing thinking

still breathing
i know people who
are happy
how do i do that

(the angst filled days of my youth
lasted several decades
followed by a decade of
self care
to repair)

its been a long time.
half a century.
i like my home i
love my family.
i made it.

love now

the curious nesting habits of humans
studies have shown a preference
for elevations overlooking
a body of water
with a wide open space below

we have acquired a previously inhabited
human nest
strange
who built and lived and died
we hardly know their names after researching
i have it written down somewhere
am i thinking too much now
as my older relatives pass away
one by one
closer and closer
you don't waste time
waiting for tomorrow
or wondering if the future will
remember you
love the people here today
as my three year old daughter said tonight
group hug!

bedrock foundation treasure chamber

deep down in the basement
where all things go
gravity pulls particles and
all this other stuff
down
unused and stockpiled
hoarded for the future
settled into a shelf a pile
as low as it can go
resting on rock
once molten lava
1.1 billion years ago
the duluth complex now
cold hard basement floor
bedrock foundation holds
an archive of our life in
boxes, tubs, bags, bins
connected by empty spider webs
waiting

does this make me happy

marie kondo says
hold an item and if it sparks joy in you
then keep it
i like that
ive done a lot of holding and
feeling
kept me busy during the
long winter
the pandemic isolation winter
and here we are it's march
staring down spring
and the basement
is perfect
yes
absolutely perfect
walk away
walk away
when the grass begins to grow
we will apply the
kon-mari method
a time of change is near
organize your mind

fifty

i turned fifty this year
here i am
my daughter is asleep inside the house
outside is summer and the scent of
white pine phenolic compounds
healing power tree i breathe deep
the smell takes me back to innocence
the big thompson canyon in colorado
(how it was before the flood)
i let go of pain and anger
this backyard is a place that
has always felt safe and
not even the racing electric tools or
exploding fireworks
barking dogs
racing engines
military planes overhead suggesting
potential doom as we know
from history
every empire falls
not even that gets to me here

the buck deer in the woods behind the house
he was there
maybe a bow hunter got him now

the summer fawns found in
high bushes on quiet trails through town
two fawns running jumping onto
the football field by myers-wilkins elementary
they were living the dream running free
i have a free grocery for them in our front yard
their favorite is red clover and
anything
the bunnies chow down like beavers
we shield the trunks of our fruit trees
not evil, just hungry

sitting on the porch of my daughter's playhouse
by the alley far away from streets and
people and packages
flags and bags and broken mufflers
screams of joy and anger
a two year old will do some screaming
she is napping with Sonja and
the playhouse is quiet
very quiet
nice and quiet
not even the train horn or the
whirring electric engine or
that sound in the distance the
low hum of capitalism
the vibration of the earth being consumed

okay that does get to me a little here as i
breathe in and breathe out the
white pine trees older than me
sitting with my elders
i try to be respectful
listen and
learn

fire hydrant altruism

i see a lot of snow has fallen
ive been shoveling
snow piled high to eye level
there is nowhere left to put the snow
it's quiet outside a thick quilt of crystals
silencing sound and slowing the city

i shovel out the fire hydrant on the corner
every time it snows
adopt-a-hydrant altruism
i must be an adult now
brushing off the yellow painted metal
they just installed a new hydrant last year
so nice
a dash of color in this cold
black and white world
i sleep better knowing
the hydrant is ready.

my family in california is chased by fire
burned out of the apartment on christmas eve my
sister and nephew and sister's partner all
homeless on christmas eve damn and then
years later my parents blocks away from
the racing flames of the tubb fire

santa rosas north side
fire spreading faster than a car can drive
our old house in coffey park burnt to the ground
good thing my parents moved or
they would be gone
i go for morning walks when visiting them
to the blackened manzanita trees and
check in with the massive old eucalyptus tree
a survivor
disaster struck a town that
everyone thought was invulnerable
god's chosen place
humbled

ive adopted a fire hydrant here in duluth
shovel snow in winter
cut down weeds in summer
fire alarms have fresh batteries on every floor
fire extinguishers ready
because that's what we do
is survive
and be ready
thinking about my family two time zones away
i have to believe it's okay that i live in minnesota
they have community there to help them
they are not alone
like the people on my block are not alone

because i am here and
i have faith in
people
i am ready
to talk

transition

we are holding

three years old
sleeping next to me i roll and then
you roll and touch my cheek
a little smile on your face
secure

upset before bed
passionate
you said, help me calm down.
i kneel
“grab my ears”
you grab both
like jumper cables
teeth together and eyes wide
muscles quiver and
synapses firing
“breathe just breathe”
you do
“everything is okay”
crying becomes breathing
“lets talk”
we are
holding

i can talk

my daughter says.

i can talk, like she

discovered a gift wrapped in shiny paper

poppa i can talk!

she talks to share thoughts

talks to ask questions.

i used to imagine myself teaching children

just thinking about what i knew and

explaining how things worked so that

a child would easily understand

and now that practice i once

recited to myself in make believe

i use with my daughter

i am teaching

i used to imagine the fun i would have

playing with children

and how to keep them safe

ways that i would

change and ways that i

would keep the same.

gardening in the backyard

planting trees, keep all that

not listening and not knowing

my child was being bullied at school

change that.
letting her express emotions
without shutting them down, yes do that.
letting her feel sad
and happy mad
joyous excited
exuberant scared
angry
loving courageous
curious playful
be present, be aware
let her be.

you, me, the backyard

breathing in the forest, breathing out i walk.
when you were first born
i carried you in the backyard
swaddled in a cozy cotton wrap before your nap
the forest bathing helped you calm down and sleep
how lucky to have a backyard with so many trees
pine, spruce, birch, rowan, apple, cherry, ash

when you were older you began to crawl
sensation, your bare hands on the cool green grass
made your eyes go wide
you looked at the dirt on your hands
curious
you noticed lady bugs and ants crawling with you
when you were older you could walk while i
held both of your hands
climbing the steep hillside of Duluth and grunting
“Ungh!” with each step
until you made it to
the top and could
 look down
across the treetops and
roofs of buildings and
over the lake

to point out the air ambulance helicopters and
passenger jets and the moon
i never saw them first because
i was always looking down at you
you were always looking up at me
stars and moon above my head
except when you were watching your footsteps
touching wood chips and leaves
backyard trail that we made for you

when stronger, confident
you only wanted one of my hands
soon only when going up the stairs or
on a steep part
then the day came when you refused
my offer
you wanted to climb the hill
all by yourself
and i held my hands back
but kept them out of my pockets, watching close
keeping you safe
tottering up the hillside
to the very top by the old white pine trees where
the air smells of dry red needle magic that
cushion the ground like
a cozy quilt
you turned around and laughed in triumph

“I did it!”

the day came when you asked
to go in the backyard and
go see momma up at the top on a lawn chair
and i said yes go ahead
and i stayed sitting there on the deck as you
walked
and climbed and
reached the top
Sonja looked up from her book
and you were alone
“You came up here all by yourself?”
she looked around for me, scanning the yard
our eyes met as she looked down
i waved and
smiled

we also had to grow and change
let you do what you need to do
even when it is scary to us
knowing the day will come when
we will not be there anymore
in our bodies
we will not be present with our hands
to keep you safe
we will surround you

interconnected
energy and matter
things we cannot explain
we will not hold your hand anymore because
we are your hand
everything we know
 feel
 love
we have given to you
and you know what to do.

sidewalk snow magic

the morning after the storm
fresh snow a cozy comforter
we are on the sidewalk
a steep yard next to it
the blazing sun cast sharp shadows of
my daughter and i
she stopped to stamp her boot in the snow,
that's my footprint.
i pressed my boot in the snow next to hers,
that's my footprint.
i pointed to our shadows on the snow
look!
my shadow waved to her.
she giggled and
her shadow waved back
i said, let's hug our shadows
and i hugged my shadow
she hugged her shadow and
made a loving sound
i squeezed my shadow, i love you shadow!
love you! she squeezed her shadow
then her shadow hugged my shadow and
she as holding me
we laughed and made tracks

i did not dream i flew over everyone

i saw your grammas house

when we took off from minneapolis

she lives in a tower

down by that little lake

when i was collecting eucalyptus buttons for you

in california

a bird buzzed my head

mad i was in its pantry stealing seeds

when i was walking in ragle ranch park and

saw a toddler flying a kite

i thought of you and wished my family was here

in quiet mist of the morning walk i

saw lavender growing and

i could smell you

the boeing 737-800 moving down through cloud

layers closer to home

i cant see but

feel you in time space and

felt a burden lift

gliding on rain clouds fresh

i began to feel excited for this

journey home

cotton pajamas

it is time to
rub arnica on sore body
neck and back then
let go of this
struggle to relax
it is time for
stretchy cozy pants
on a friday night
in spring
let us sit close
hold and
do nothing
be nothing
think nothing
we can breathe
while the children
sleep and grow

Other titles by Robert Wildwood:

Standing Unafraid:
Healing Trauma with EMDR Therapy

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Surviving Your Adventurous Lifestyle

Unsinkable: How To Build Plywood
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