

## How to Walk with Steve

**Robert Fromberg**

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Robert Fromberg's memoir *How to Walk with Steve* is about how his autistic brother became the stabilizing force in his life.

Fromberg and Steve's parents were artists, and their moods set the tone of their children's early childhoods. Fromberg describes their mother, in particular, as cold, brilliant, and brittle; these qualities played a powerful role in shaping her sons. For Fromberg, his connection with his brother, Steve, became "the irreducible minimum." Through their difficult early life and into Fromberg's two marriages, having children, and distance across states, Steve's constancy—his maps, his idiosyncrasies, and his faith in his brother—grounded Fromberg. In tender terms, he captures his evolving relationship with Steve, as well as the emotional expansiveness of growing up.

Fromberg's detailed stories follow as he awakens into himself by making sense of his experiences. He recalls seeing himself as invisible, as guilty, and as part of a greater world plan. His ruminations, though they are not always sensical, stay true to the emotions of the ages and perspectives they represent. Fromberg left the Midwest for New York City at sixteen, and his descriptions convey the excitement and awakening brought on by the city. He records long nights at CBGBs, and time spent mimicking people he admired, in immersive, rich terms.

When it comes to Steve, the book defers to awe, with Fromberg marveling at the complexity of Steve's mind. He documents the small gestures Steve uses to convey his emotions, as well as his vast capacity for memorization and classification. Steve is present throughout as a wonder, and a ballast when other parts of Fromberg's life were coming apart.

The evocative vignettes of the memoir *How to Walk with Steve* capture growing up with the steady presence of a beloved brother.

CAMILLE-YVETTE WELSCH (September / October 2021)

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