

How to Fly

(in Ten Thousand Easy Lessons)

Poetry

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Barbara
Kingsolver

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NOTES

“How to Fly” borrows an image—the unbodied breath of a bird—from Percy Bysshe Shelley’s “To a Skylark.”

“How to Survive This” was published in the *New York Times* Magazine, March 26, 2020.

“How to Be Married” is for Rob and Paula Kingsolver.

“How to Love Your Neighbor” is for Frances Goldin.

“How to Be Hopeful,” part of the Duke University commencement address, May 2009, was published in *Creating a Life You’ll Love*, edited by Mark Chimsky-Lustig (Sellers Publishing, 2009).

The cycle *Pellegrinaggio* is dedicated *con tanto amore* to Joann Hopp, who was born (and, frankly, remains) Giovanna Spano.

“This Is How They Come Back to Us” owes its title and spirit to Wendell Berry. The poems in this section are for the dead who are named and the living who bear their losses, especially Anna and Clara Petri, Sara Hopp, Joann Hopp, and Joe Findley.

For “My Mother’s Last Forty Minutes” I’m indebted to my sister, brother, and father, custodians of their own versions of this story, with a nod to William Carlos Williams’s “XXII” from *Spring and All*.

The italicized lines in “My First Derby Party” are from the song “My Old Kentucky Home,” by Stephen Foster. The poem is dedicated to Fenton Johnson.

“Creation Stories,” “Meadowview Elementary Spelling Bee,” “Blow Me—,” and “After” are for Camille and Lily Kingsolver.

The title “Walking Each Other Home” acknowledges accidental similarity to a quote from Ram Dass, “We are always walking each other home.” The poem is dedicated to Felicia Mitchell.

“Cage of Heaven” borrows images and lines from these poems by Emily Dickinson: “Some keep the Sabbath going to church,” “I felt a Funeral in my brain,” “Who has not found the heaven below,” “To fight aloud is very brave,” and “A narrow fellow in the grass.”

“Insomniac Villanelle” is for my three A.M. friends, with thanks to Sally Carpenter.

“My Afternoon with The Postman” describes Vincent van Gogh’s portraits of his mail carrier, Joseph Roulin, with thanks to the Barnes Foundation gallery in Philadelphia, where one of these masterpieces hangs unobtrusively in a corner.

“Where It Begins” was previously published in slightly different form in *Knitting Yarns*, edited by Ann Hood (W. W. Norton, 2014); and *The Best American Science and Nature Writing 2014*, edited by Deborah Blum and Tim Folger (Houghton Mifflin, 2014). The epigraph is from Sylvia Plath’s poem “Wintering.”

“Ghost Pipes” was published in *Orion*, Autumn 2020. Ghost Pipes are *Monotropa uniflora* (also known as corpse plant or Indian pipe), found in woodlands of North America, European Russia, and Asia. The freelance life is never simple.

“Ephemera” is dedicated to the staff and friends of the Blue Ridge Discovery Center in Konnarock, Virginia.

“Love Poem, with Birds” is for Steven Hopp.

“Cradle” is dedicated to Alicia Paghera.

“Mussel, Minnow” lists a few of many deceptions used by American freshwater mussels for the transport of their larvae; for an overview, see “How Mussels Fool Fish into Carrying Their Parasitic Babies,” by Jason Bittel, in *National Geographic*, November 28, 2017.

“Great Barrier” was published in *Time* magazine, September 12, 2019.

One of its lines echoes the opening of “Mending Wall” by Robert Frost: “Something there is that doesn’t love a wall.”

“Forests of Antarctica” gratefully acknowledges inspiration from the lines “I am the earth that waits. / You are the earth that walks,” from “What the Trail Says,” by Pamela Alexander, in *Slow Fire*. The referenced trees are Antarctic beeches (*Nothofagus moorei*) in the Great Dividing Range of Australia, part of the relict Gondwana Rainforest that once dominated Antarctica. They became Australian flora when the two continents separated 180 million years ago. Individual trees on Mount Bithongabel are 2,500 to 3,000 years old, with some cloned groupings estimated to be as old as 15,000 years.