



Exit: The Endings That Set Us Free

Sara Lawrence-Lightfoot

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From a renowned sociologist, the wisdom of saying goodbye

Sara Lawrence-Lightfoot is enthralled by exits: long farewells, quick goodbyes, sudden endings, the ordinary and the extraordinary. There's a relationship, she attests, between small goodbyes and our ability "to master and mark the larger farewells."

In *Exit*, her tenth book, she explores the ways we leave one thing and move on to the next; how we anticipate, define, and reflect on our departures; our epiphanies that something is over and done with. Lawrence-Lightfoot, a sociologist and a professor at the Harvard Graduate School of Education, has interviewed more than a dozen women and men in states of major change, and she paints their portraits with sympathy and insight: a gay man who finds home and wholeness after coming out; a sixteen-year-old boy forced to leave Iran in the midst of the violent civil war; a Catholic priest who leaves the church he has always been devoted to, the life he has loved, and the work that has been deeply fulfilling; an anthropologist who carefully stages her departure from the "field" after four years of research; and many more.

Too often, Lawrence-Lightfoot believes, we exalt new beginnings at the expense of learning from our goodbyes. *Exit* finds wisdom and perspective in the possibility of moving on and marks the start of a new conversation, to help us discover how we might make our exits with purpose and dignity.

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