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Exit: The Endings That Set Us Free

Sara Lawrence-Lightfoot



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The wisdom of saying goodbye

In this wise and provocative book, the renowned sociologist Sara Lawrence-Lightfoot trains her lens on the myriad exits we make in our lives: exits big and small, extraordinary and ordinary, quick and protracted, painful and liberating.

Exits are ubiquitous. Part of the historical narrative of our country, they mark the physical landscapes we inhabit; they're braided into the arc of our individual development, laced into our intergenerational relationships, shaped by economic crisis, global mobility, and technological innovations. But we tend to ignore them, often seeing them as signs of failure.

For two years Lawrence-Lightfoot traveled around the country listening to people tell their stories of leaving, witnessing rituals of goodbye, and producing the penetrating portraits that have become her signature. A gay man who finds home and wholeness after coming out of the closet; a sixteen-year-old-boy forced to leave Iran in the midst of a violent civil war; a Catholic priest who leaves the church; an anthropologist who carefully stages her departure from the field after years of research; and many more. Lawrence-Lightfoot shares their stories with sympathy and insight, finding the universal patterns that reframe our exit narratives. *Exit* finds wisdom in the possibility of moving on. It marks the start of a new conversation: a chance to discover how to make our exits with dignity and grace.

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