

Olive Senior



The Secret of Flying Close to the Sun Without Melting Wings

Discard the illusion of bearing yourself up. Only Bird,
Sun's messenger, can transport you. This is not
about wings of power

(that will burn, melt) but the power of wings lent to you
by Grandfather Macaw. If he chooses
to hear you.

Know that you come into the world featherless
and naked. Like an egg. A cypher.
Grandfather might permit you to pluck

one set of feathers to dress yourself in. Lend you hollow
bones (to be returned after flight); breathe you into
the lightness of air. (The feathers you might

be allowed to keep for many lifetimes.) To prepare, know
it is not a question of artifice but of becoming.
Not build up but strip down. To dress up

you need the feathers, the paint, the beads, the flowers.
The hallucinogenic rhythm of the rattles, the
drums, your steed.

Power will come not swiftly on the wing but feather out of
the homage. The humility. The loving
preparation. The desire

to transform into Other. Leading to that auspicious moment:
the whirl of wings speak plain. You have entered
that place where flight is a given.

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Calabash

For you, flight is given as gift of bird messenger sustained
by rattle, by drum, by song. You soar, sail, glide.

For a brief moment you gain Sun's nod.

You are Bird itself. But know: such ecstasy is not forever.

You will reenter your world, but let down lightly
cradled as gently as egg.

