

CAMINO POEMS



A PILGRIMAGE FOR CLIMATE JUSTICE

Booklet Design & Illustration by
John W Richardson
johnwrichardson.co.uk

POEMS FOR THE PLANET

Camino to COP26
A pilgrimage for climate justice

We are united by our faith; a faith that we can advocate and influence and be the change that we want for our world.

We choose to walk to COP26 as a practice of that faith, an act of connection with the earth on which we walk and the people with whom we walk and the communities through which we pass; and we make our way in kinship with the peoples and creatures of the earth who are suffering and displaced by climate and ecological breakdown. We do so peacefully and lawfully, ready to engage and learn, because we care and we have hope.

EXTINCTION REBELLION INTERFAITH GROUP

Support our walk and our global mission to halt mass extinction and minimise the risk of social collapse.

Donations

<https://chuffed.org/project/caminotocop>



Lead With Love

**You gotta put one foot in front of the other
And lead with love
Put one foot in front of the other
And lead with love**

Don't give up hope
You're not alone
Don't you give up
Keep movin on

Lift up your eyes
Don't you despair
Look up ahead
The path is there

I know you're scared
And I'm scared too
But here I am
Right next to you

Lyrics by Melanie DeMore



A Pilgrimage

The motley crew emerge from
the Cathedral,
wrapped in blessings and raincoats; picked-up and cross-stitched,
knitted together by thoughts and longings
of Survival,
our footsteps
the common thread; booted feet
transporting us
constantly
consistently
through half-caught conversations
desires and hopes,
(as well as briars and stiles and cow pats),
onwards
to a place of
tomorrow
where dreams
transform hearts.



Shocked
to tears
by generosity
and inescapable blessings;
Carried on a continuum of
faith, discomfort
anger and foolishness, gently holding, shaping spreading
What is,
into
What will be What can be What must be

Hidden,
by the
forgotten remembering
of one hundred-mile legs We walk, We walk,
We walk,
tenderly
on shared ancestral paths. And we sing.
With one simple
goal we firmly place
one foot in front
of the other
and walk
our longed-for world
Into Being.

Janne Bird

September 2021

After the Western Camino to COP26

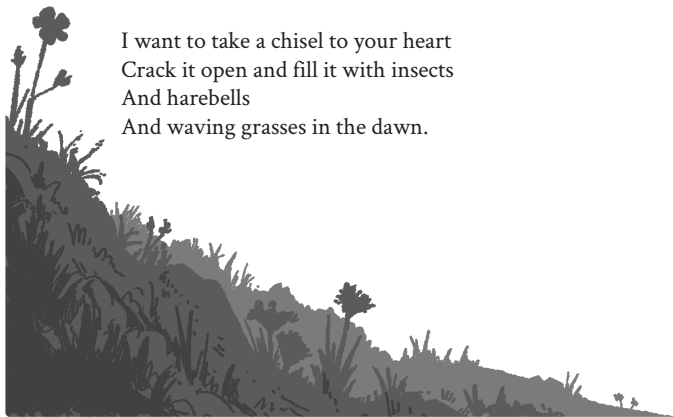


Camino Poems by Iszi Jones

Before - Camino preparation

Maps, compass, duct tape, string
Check Severn Way: path clear? Route planner
Book leave from work.
Rainhat? Swimsuit?
IPCC report: unless there are immediate, rapid and large-scale reductions in greenhouse gas emissions, limiting warming to close to 1.5 or even 2 degrees C will be beyond reach
Water bottle (2).
Track across cornfield. Post marker hidden - aim for church.
Wobbly stile. 13 miles.
Why am I doing this?
Notebook. Hand lens. Pencils. Flag.
Words alone are not enough.
Straight on into New Coppice - could be muddy if wet
Kiribati, the first country that will be swallowed by the sea due to climate change.
How many prs socks?
Red rainhat from Mum :)
Order more covid tests. Check Worcester timings.
River meanders - do not go into next field unless you want to walk all the way round.
Beautiful demoiselle.
Craig will lend sleeping mat. Buy inflatable pillow?
Can I actually do this?
Worldwide, 227 environmental activists were killed in 2020.
Earplugs?
Chk Jonathan re music. Send songbook.
Busy road here: stewards: Hi Vis?
86 million internal climate migrants in Sub-Saharan Africa by 2050.
Blister plasters.
Gate under dead tree. Gatekeeper butterflies!
The UK has experienced a 13% decline in species abundance
Send press release. Mikey- leaflets.
Time from motorway 2.10. 14.3 miles.

I want to take a chisel to your heart
Crack it open and fill it with insects
And harebells
And waving grasses in the dawn.



Day 1, 9th September: Bristol to Frampton Cotterell

We will roar like the motorway
We will arrive like a sharp shower of rain
And flood the paths of life with love
We will carry our faith like flags
And our truth like banners
We will share our care like food
Carry each others burdens and stories
We will be a tribe without boundaries
But bound to the land
We will slip and slide through our human frailty
But find our feet in the good rich clay
We will accept the nettle stings along with the blackberries
And we will walk to Glasgow.
We will walk with the love we are given along the way
We will speak with the words we have heard
And we will roar louder than the motorway
We will walk to Glasgow
And carry our rejoicing home



Day 2, 10th September: Frampton Cottrell to Wotton-under-Edge

Faced with fire and flood and fury
What is it we can do?
We take this weight upon our backs
And we keep on marching through.
We left Frampton with the blessing of
The power that walks beside;
Climb fences stiles and gates because
There's truth we cannot hide;
Accept the gifts of mother nature
Though the best are hard to reach;
We talk with bulls and trees and humans
To find the lessons that they teach.
We walk gently past the heartsease
And ignore the nettles' sting;
Walk like pilgrims not like tourists
Learn the songs that we must sing.
We find the Edge and keep on going
We will make the hillsides ring:
We push the boundaries of the possible
To open the eyes of kings.



Day 3, 11th September: Wotton to Stroud

Verse 1

'Would you like me to take your packs?'

Verse 2

We are walking to Glasgow for COP26.

'Give them hell from me'

Verse 3

Eyebright, Harebell, Scabious, Hemp Agrimony,
Meadow Brown, Common Blue, Small Cooper, Speckled Wood,
Ivy, Beech, Oak, Maple
Waxcap, Dung Beetle, Solitary Bees

Verse 4

That next rise is the top of the hill

Verse 5

'I'm studying the impacts of climate change on seabirds and I just want to thank you for doing this. We need both science and activism.'

Verse 6

Baby, dog, ball

Verse 7

What message would you like us to take to COP?

'Love is everything.'



Day 4, 12th September: Stroud

They speak the truth
Word by word
They grow their song
Tone by tone
We walk our path
Step by step
They build a cairn
Stone by stone
As lives are lost
One by one
As species die
As forests burn
As islands drown
By word, and tone, and step, and stone
We will remember them
We speak, and grow, and walk, and build
To find a future
That will honour them



Day 5, 13th September: Stroud to Gloucester

We are transient:

Bristol, Frampton, Wotton, Stroud

They loved us, gave us joy and nurture, and fell behind

Some who walked beside us have been and gone

We know their names

I have seen

Life is like a vapour written on a grave

A swallow, an autumn flower, a shaft of sun through trees

We are transient

We know of others that have loved and cared and fallen

Forests uprooted, townships burned, islands flooded

Beings fallen by the wayside of this path that we are on

A childhood lost, a life, a species

We don't know their names

Where are they now?

We must leave them behind

But step by step we carry them

Though we ourselves are transient

We will remember them

Carry their voices onward as we may

We will remember them

With every step along our path

We carry them in song



Gloucester, St Mary De Crypt Church, 13th September

Tonight I have felt older than this medieval church
My stonework exposed
The drains of centuries' waste open to view
My plasterwork is crumbling
And any hope of sacred silence shattered by the noise of city streets

But I have been refurbished by
A sleeping child
Smiles of fellowship
Stephen on an altar
Rejuvenating words
And a never-ending breakfast



Day 6, 14th September: Gloucester to Tewkesbury

A gentle hill
Grey river flowing
Soundless clouds of crane-fly wings
Silent pilgrims in the soft wet air
Birdsong in orchards
Ancient chapel, stones uplifted with another song
Come to rest in place where walls are painted with
Love
Joy
Peace
Patience
Gentleness
Kindness
Goodness
Faithfulness
And self-control.
A pilgrim home.



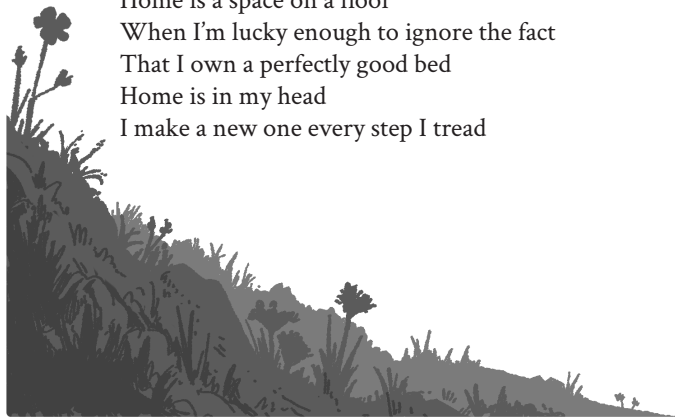
Day 7, 15th September: Tewkesbury to Malvern

Home is a samba band
A hand placed on a shoulder
Home is my land
Our land
Every suffering land we fight for
With our poetry and music
Our art and our spreadsheets
And the blisters on our feet
It's everyone we meet

Home is a man in a polar bear suit
Home is the truth
Home is friends who'll stand together when the world ends
And those new met with every mile
Who yet can greet me with a smile
Home is you helping me over a stile

Home is these hills
A place where kindness spills my tears
It's anywhere a robin trills
And where our planet's ills
Lie open but not left to lie
No, home is where we beat the lies by rising up

And home is a cup of tea,
A cake; a lot of cakes
Is it time for a break yet?
Home is the spot on which I set my pack
And rest my sore and aching feet
And ease my back
Home is a space on a floor
When I'm lucky enough to ignore the fact
That I own a perfectly good bed
Home is in my head
I make a new one every step I tread



Yes, home is a place you leave
A line of pilgrims weaving through a field of stubble
A tower in the distance, a song of grieving
A dance with bells a-jangle
The light of a candle

Home is a cricket singing
The sound of swans winging down the river
The place they come to rest
Home is the best food you've ever tasted
And the sweetest water
Home is a seat beneath an oak
Where my rootlets meet your fungal network
And we can speak

Home is this earth our mother
When we know there is no other
And we walk lightly knowing
Bands, bears, water flowing
Robins and crickets
Fellows and friends and not-yet-mets
Are all our home worth walking for
So every step to Glasgow is because we love our home



Day 8, 16th September: Malvern to Worcester

A Bishop, a Methodist Superintendent, a Buddhist priest

And several criminal activists walk into a city

Is this a joke?

No, it's a pilgrimage for the planet

Where there is only one truth:

That we need to act now

We need to join our voices in power

And speak our truth to those leaders in Glasgow

And show them what solidarity looks like

Show them this is what humanity looks like

Why the long faces?

The ecological catastrophe is no joke

And we are not laughing

But we are walking together

And we know the one truth

And that is love



Day 9, 17th September: Worcester to Stourport

A long day
Feet beginning to hurt
Packs feel heavy
The poem for today is Exhale.

Days 10 & 11, 18-19th September: Stourport to Stourbridge

Today's poem came in the garden of Stourbridge Quaker Meeting House

The sun filters through the rain clouds and kisses my hard-walked foot,
Drips of gold and silver fall like blessings from the oak,
A bumblebee wanders the grass.
We have walked seeking sweetness to carry onward
To those we cannot help but feel need to know the taste,
The sustenance that grows here ready to feed the world.
Warmth has rained upon us us a thousandfold
From town upon town, tree upon tree,
In words and open hands and car horn beeps;
Welcome dropped upon us like sun-imbued water:
From 350 year old friends,
From the tattoo artist in Stourport,
From narrow boat and bicycles and bin lorries;
We have wandered the land like bees seeking nectar
And found so many different blooms
To carry onward.
There must be nourishment for all the world in this:
The light that drips from oaks in gardens of peace.
We must gather the drops of honey and bear them onward.



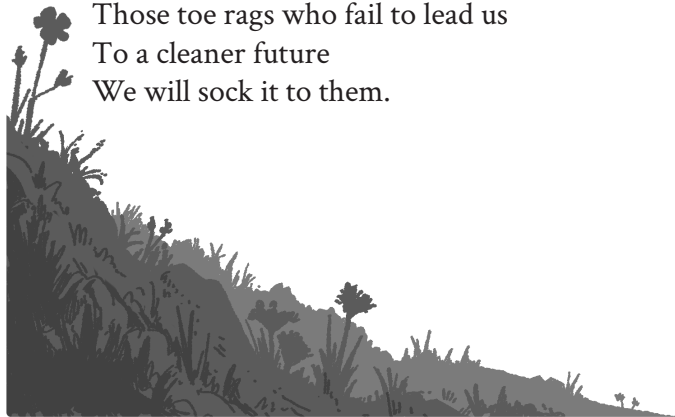
Day 12, 20th September: Stourbridge to Birmingham

Today's poem came from the imagination of Helen..

In every town we find a flapjack
And leave a sock
With sufficient flapjack
Pilgrims will roll into Glasgow
Moved by the momentum of loving cake

Those who come behind
The elders fleeing the mire of inaction and despair
Armed with free bus passes
Carrying the wishes of the masses
They will gather every sock along the way
And roll them together with the words we have heard
The truth
Of our passage
The message of our sweaty feet
Bound together with supportive cake crumbs they will make
A sock ball of our love and rage

Together, we will roll into glasgow
Passion fatted pilgrims
Powered with people's prayers
Pushing our sockball of sweaty truth
To raise a stink amongst
Those toe rags who fail to lead us
To a cleaner future
We will sock it to them.



Unpacking

I have unpacked
A pile of dirty clothes embellished with
Cotswold dust and Severn mud and blackberry stains
Plus a few fascist thorns but
Minus the odd sock.
A rain hat, barely used.
Sunscreen, ditto, but only because mine was buried and people share.
A negative covid test (hooray)
A pack of nuts and raisins, their use usurped by cake.
A crumbling pack of oatcakes that will stay in my pack forever
To remind me of Sarah.
Scraps of half-written poetry and
Several plastic bags much humbled by comparison
With Stephen's Waitrose bag of fame.
(It, enduring till the end, needed no pack to carry it
But carried itself with glory unto Birmingham).

I have unpacked my blisters
Several aches and pains
Some tired old arguments against action
And a few aggressive engines.
Put them aside
With a heap of responsibility
And doubts about the way.

But I will continue to carry
This pile of determination, love and
Sheer indomitable will to carry on
I'll retain the many lines of song
Flowers and words from strangers
Bees and bells and butterflies
Escape with Mikey
Silly 'stylish' puns
The admiration of a maple tree and
The joyous sight of Julia in the distance
A haven on a hilltop
Refuge with our pilgrim family

I'll carry the belief
That every step taken by every person
Matters
And with love and hope
Unpack them every day to share (if I am able)
And then repack again to carry on.

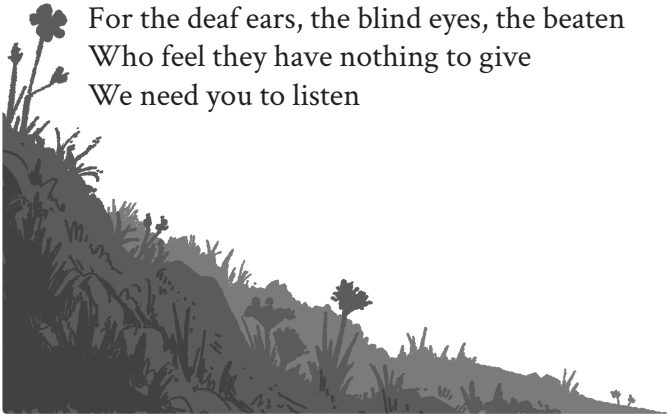


Malvern - Parliament Square - Wembley Police Station, September 2020

For the people sitting in silence
With their love and their faith and their grief
We need you to listen
For the ones who are dancing and singing
Drumming their passion and rage on the streets
We need you to listen

For the hills and the meadows behind me
Threatened islands of life in my heart
For the trees and the woodlands you've bulldozed
For the destruction of life in your path
We need you to listen
For the wild things running and dying
As the buzz of their life force fades
For the lands degraded and burning
And the debt that will never be paid
We need you to listen

For the grandiose facades of your vanity
Speaking only to each other's power
For the cruel web of lies that entangle us
From your faceless and heartless glass towers
For the elders, the youth and the children
Who are shouting that they want to live
For the deaf ears, the blind eyes, the beaten
Who feel they have nothing to give
We need you to listen



For the dirt on the street that I lie on
With the bones of our one earth beneath
For the blue sky above the pollution
And the hope of a life that can breathe
For the police who are carrying my pain away
It's too much to carry alone
For the Black skin of the officer bearing me
And the centuries of harm I have done
We need you to listen

For the statues of freedom and slavery
Voices silenced in marble and bronze
For the live and the strength of my people
That cushions the slam of the doors
For the hollow grand houses we pass
As they hide in their luxury and fear
For the grey streets of ordinary millions
Where life is just something to bear
For the white tower, green heart of Grenfell
Where the souls of the dead cry our shame
For the refugees denied our asylum
For the voiceless who shoulder the blame
We need you to listen

For the vast and glorious planet
That vibrates outside of my cell
For the words I don't have and the stories
That I am unable to tell
For the people who sit with my silence
With my love and my hope and my grief
We need you to listen



Camino Poems by Stephen Micallef

Our Pilgrimage

We walk our special pilgrimage of urgency
A pilgrimage like no other
A deep spiritual necessity
Connecting our love of the Earth
and the prayer of our hearts
Walking to Glasgow to save the planet
for our children and grandchildren
Our diplomatic mission of hope
Trudging ever onwards our flags fluttering
Connecting the hopes and prayers of towns we pass
Let us fix this broken planet
For apathy is injustice
Inspiration is renewal
We walk to stop our earth dying
Fossil fuels in human hands
have become the biblical Sodom and Gomorrah
The sin to wreak havoc on all life
We edge towards the tipping point of no return -
Floods, wildfires, famine, disease



These should not be the inheritance
we leave our children for our sins
Leave the coal in the ground
We have forced our oceans to rise
and they will keep on rising
Acidifying the seas, poisoning them with oil spills
and killing plastics
Carbon is baked into our climate
and it can only get hotter
So we are walking to Glasgow and must not falter
We won't let the earth roll away from us without a fight
As we inch towards Glasgow – let's get it right
Let us touch the hearts of all
Now the wildfires of urgency be upon us
May the breath of inspiration lighten our step
Listen world leaders
to the deep music of the Earth
Return her in healing to her Ancient Joy



Camino to Cop

Singing to Glasgow
Climbing 10,000 stiles -
Walking straight up the hill -
Walking to solve the problem -
We're gonna walk some sense
into the World leaders
They'll fly in their smug polluting Jets
but you can walk more sense -
Walk 500 miles in a
Blessed gaffer taped boot -
than they could ever agree on -
So we'll climb 10,000 stiles to Cop26 -
And Angels'll lift us over
and lighten our load -
And every jammed gate will open -
We're walking to Glasgow
to tell the World leaders -
Wake up now!
Act now!
Save our beautiful Earth
We gotta turn this system round
and we'll walk to Glasgow to do it!



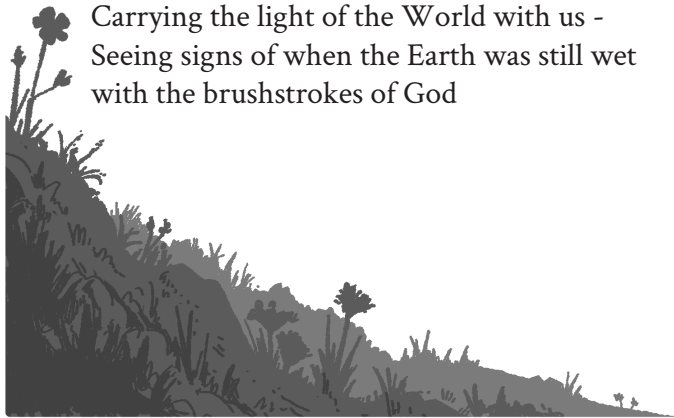
Cake till you Pop

So warmly greeted as we swang
from Church Hall to Church Hall
by loving sympathisers of our
Camino to Cop Pilgrimage
We crossed from Bristol to Birmingham
Our mission to spiritually bang the heads together
of our World leaders and pull their socks up
to cut fossil fuel emissions totally
We were being utterly spoiled
Tiring though the walk to Glasgow is
it was less Camino to Cop -
More Cake till you Pop
Vegan chocolate brownies galore
and flapjacks to floor a gourmet
Buns of non-dairy cream
and gateaux to make you dream
It was cake till you pop
And would you like another one?
Yes please! Yum! Yum!
It was save our ecosystem
Cake after cake
A pilgrimage to the next bun



‘Bella Mama Hey’

Singing ‘Bella Mama hey’ I find a Kestrel feather
nestling in the mint
Scaling improbably tall stiles
designed for giant long-legged Pilgrims
“How you doing?” Janna asks
“Not savaged by a Badger yet!” I reply
Pilgrims think I’m sponsored by Waitrose
to get my plastic bag thru
1000 brambles and 120 miles
Thank you Ginny blessed gatekeeper
I smile as I trundle thru an opened gate -
I feel like I’m walking in circles to Glasgow
Still feels like Bristol is only 10 miles away -
Walking to Effin near Blinding -
Iszy rascal’s up a steep slope to investigate
Moss on a rotting lump of wood
buried under ferns
Whilst Michael stops to cradle
an elongated Rover Beetle -
it’s tail upturned in alarm like a Scorpion -
A mother and her children emerge
with trugs gathering Blackberries
Are we a stones throw from Birmingham?
Don’t bank on it -
We’re a Buzzard’s squeak away -
Carrying the light of the World with us -
Seeing signs of when the Earth was still wet
with the brushstrokes of God



Glasgie Here We Come!

Glasgie'll greet thee with glee
A million kilts'll flutter in jubilation
As 100 pipes'll keen 'n' skirl
Haggi'll be tossed to heaven with a cheer
as the Pilgrims with their urgent message
pass thru the gates into Glasgow
Let the World leaders quake
as the XR Elders arrive
on 5000 free bus passes
to blow their trumpets 'n' shake the walls
of this Fossil Fuel Jericho down -
Oil's so last century -
Phase it out with a shout we say
Save the Planet -
Let's put a curb on man-made catastrophe
Let's work together to give
the global south back their land
and give the world a helping hand



Boots, bags and Cathedrals

We left at the start of our Camino
In the drizzly rain with no time to see
Bristol Cathedral
Walking onward with intent
we missed a lot of Cathedrals -
Gloucester, Worcester, Birmingham
and an Abbey – Tewkesbury
And saw a lot of church halls
where we were Camino-feted handsomely -
No time for the Bishop of Bristol to bless our boots
Though the Bishop of Worcester blessed my supper
My left boot came unstuck on the second day
baring it's sole in the wet grass
Flapping passed Cathedrals and steeples in the distance
causing anxiety about the hundred rugged miles still to go -
It was gaffered then blessed by Iszy`s tape
only to be firmly glued back in Stroud
My blue plastic bag barely survived leaving Bristol -
A kind lady offered to bear it`s load
To her horror it immediately split
But my Waitrose bag kissed a thousand brambles
and lived!



I've Never Been Kissed by a Polar Bear Before

Tired and exhausted by my big heavy rucksack
I fell into the arms of a big polar bear
who was hanging around in a field near Malvern
He was homeless and kind to me
Polar bears have blue tongues
but he had brown shoes
One of his friends
offered to take my rucksack
I was overjoyed
It was so heavy ,
I felt so light
I thought the polar bear had brought me
Good luck
I felt rejuvenated
I looked round to thank my polar bear
But like an ice floe in the heat
He was gone

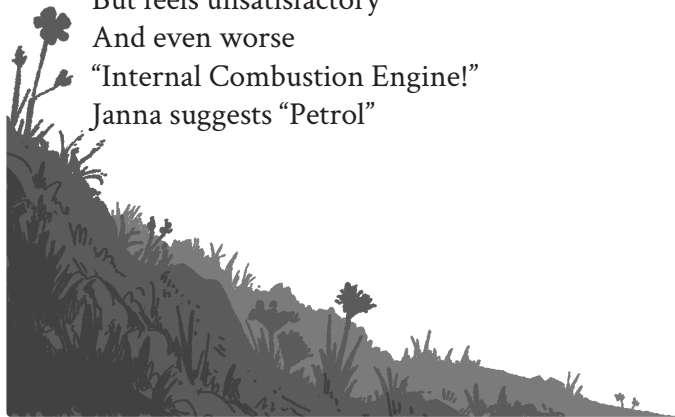


The Night Heron

Is the Night Heron watching as we go for a swim?
Ellie and Helen bathe as they sing
The Severn is warm and the current is strong
The perfect conditions for a pilgrimage song
A Kingfisher dances entranced
Here is all Heaven in one Paradisal glance

Flags Down!

Shower day - wading through a flash flood
Shoes and socks off on our first day -
Rucksack off, raincoat on
Rucksack off
Off - on - off
Raincoats off
Now it's "Car! Car!"
An aesthetic objection is made -
Can we not call "Car!" suggests Sarah
Well what else can we call them?
How about "Watch out!" or "Beware!"
I try "Motorised Vehicle!"
But feels unsatisfactory
And even worse
"Internal Combustion Engine!"
Janna suggests "Petrol"



Delphine firmly puts her foot down
I am not going to shout out “petrol!”
Quickly we revert back to the obvious
What it is - “Car! Car!”
“Car to the rear”
“Car ahead!”
“Car up front!”
And on towpaths
It’s “Bike! Bike!”
“Jogger coming up behind!”
Even “Segueaway!”
“Horses!” on the Bridleway
“Cows! - Flags down!”
“A Bull! - Flags down!”
Sheep! - Flags down!”
“Flags down!” -A horse leaning on our stile
Blocking our path
Pleased and curious to see us
Won’t budge
We’ve been stopped in our pilgrim tracks by a horse
Warren our resident horse whisperer
Fails to move the stubborn old fellow
Finally, Helen bribes the docile friendly creature
With grapes
And we’re back on course



Sceptics and Enthusiasts

Fearless Delphine tackled them all -
Sceptics, enthusiasts and pedestrians
who thought Cop 26 was 26 policemen
“Good luck with that!”
they`d say when she announced –
“We`re walking to Glasgow”
“Not thru our tiny back alleyway you`re not!”
Delphine energetically getting builders to turn off
their noisy concrete mixers to be handed a light blue
Camino to Cop card before marching back
into the great swathe of banners and flags
“What`s your message to the world leaders?”
“Tell them to stop wrecking the planet!”
We`ll tell `em!



Sing Us A Song Delphine

Sing us a song Delphine , Nelson's Blood
Oh yes, they drank the rum
that preserved his heart
when they brought it back to England
- giving the sailors Nelson's courage
Delphine has secreted on her a penny whistle
which she suddenly produces
We leave with her playing the Bunyan
To be a Pilgrim
rearranged for Glasgow -
accompanied by Morris dancing from Peter
We had devised it moments before
over porridge
Come on Delphine give us a Tyndale quote!
"The spirit is willing but the flesh is weak"
"We are a law unto ourselves"
- in the spiritual freedom of our pilgrimage
"We are a moment in time"
"Seek and you shall find"
"It came to pass"
- time is running out to save the planet
We sadly part company at Worcester
Delphine's penny whistle -
still ringing in our ears
To be a pilgrim
till we meet again
Farewell



Prayer by Helen Elwes

Mother of Mercy

Mother of Mercy - pray for us, for all your children who suffer.
For God's beautiful and fruitful earth,
which we have plundered and abused.
For the glorious and diverse creatures
whose habitats we have carelessly destroyed
and who are now facing mass extinction.

For the great forests which are burning,
our living oceans which we have polluted,
the air we breathe which we have made toxic.
For the polar ice caps rapidly melting
because we have dangerously warmed this precious planet
through our ever expanding industry and thoughtless greed.

Mother of Mercy -
we are destroying our only home
and now face a catastrophic climate crisis
which will cause unimaginable suffering to future generations
and is already devastating your poorest children in the global south.

Loving Mother of Mercy -

Please forgive us and come to our aid.

Protect us and all God's creatures, the vulnerable and suffering,
who take refuge under your all surrounding cloak.

Touch the hearts of the powerful elite

who exploit the earth for profit and let the poor suffer.

Awaken their minds and consciences to the climate
and ecological emergency which we all now face.

Guide our world leaders to listen to the scientist's urgent warnings
and act now before it is too late.

Beloved Mother -

Give us the courage to stand up for God's holy and beautiful world
and protect it against the forces who would destroy it.

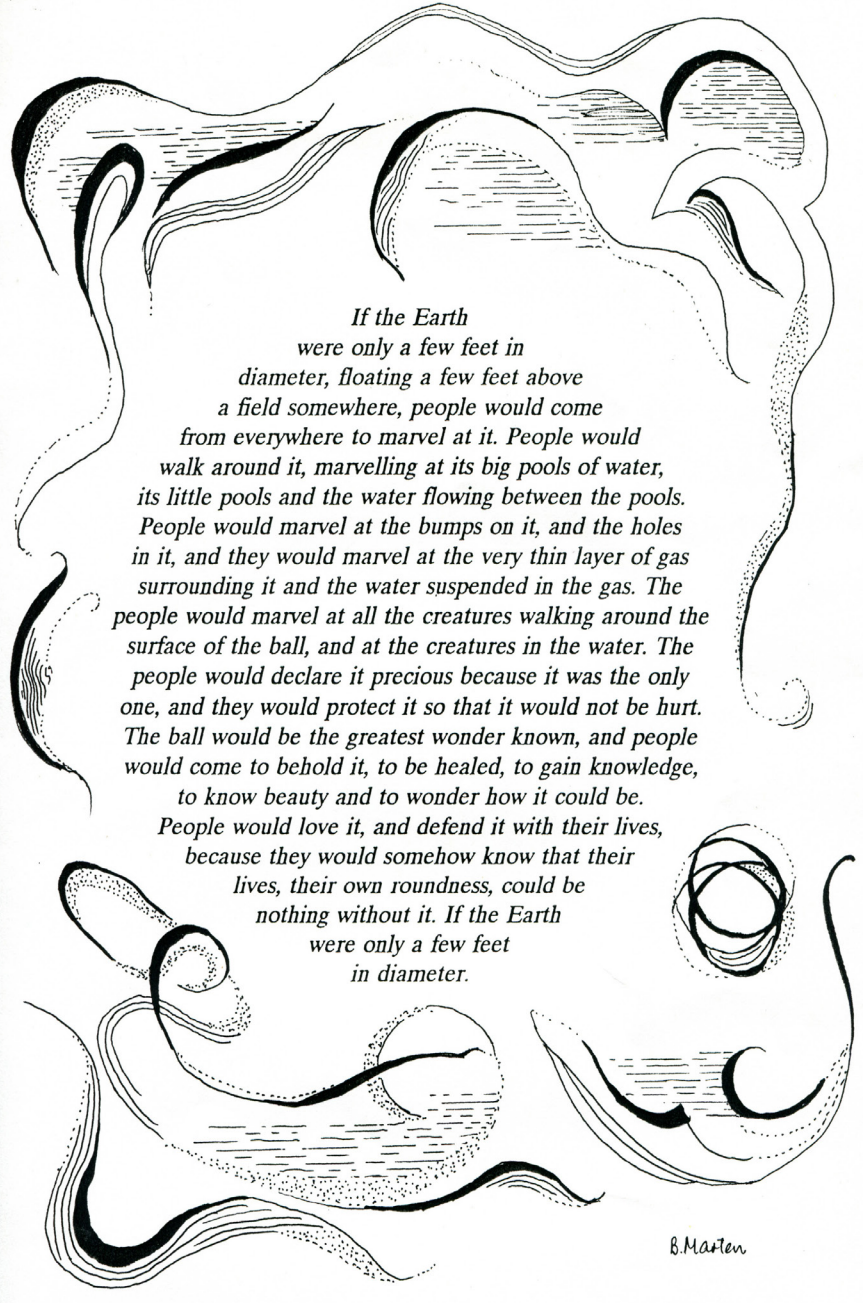
Give us the strength not to hate or despair,
but to act and speak peacefully
and with love for all your suffering children.

O Mother of Mercy and Compassion -

Pray for us at this time of our greatest need. Amen



Mother of Mercy banner by Helen Elwes



*If the Earth
were only a few feet in
diameter, floating a few feet above
a field somewhere, people would come
from everywhere to marvel at it. People would
walk around it, marvelling at its big pools of water,
its little pools and the water flowing between the pools.
People would marvel at the bumps on it, and the holes
in it, and they would marvel at the very thin layer of gas
surrounding it and the water suspended in the gas. The
people would marvel at all the creatures walking around the
surface of the ball, and at the creatures in the water. The
people would declare it precious because it was the only
one, and they would protect it so that it would not be hurt.
The ball would be the greatest wonder known, and people
would come to behold it, to be healed, to gain knowledge,
to know beauty and to wonder how it could be.
People would love it, and defend it with their lives,
because they would somehow know that their
lives, their own roundness, could be
nothing without it. If the Earth
were only a few feet
in diameter.*

B. Marten