

In *book of common breath*, d. ellis phelps subtly entices us to accompany her on a spiritual journey throughout which we encounter struggles that are both personal and universal. With words and forms that are feather-light yet saber-sharp — and in a voice that is achingly vulnerable — phelps throws down the gauntlet and engages with both monsters and mentors, forces and situations that run the gamut of shared human experience: desire, sex, marriage, childhood, parenthood, escapism, love, loss, death. Her poems grapple with serious subjects such as religious trauma, its ongoing effects of shame and self-hatred, and the ensuing quest for a spiritual path to forgiveness and self-acceptance. Unflinching in their honesty and relentless in their search for wisdom, these poems ask, “What is one to do with all this darkness?” The answers they uncover provide the long-sought, hard-earned path the speaker seeks: “i struck a stone / & made fire / i crawled into her burning face / but she did not consume me.” This collection is filled with the breath that ignites that fire. Forging through it, we come upon a place of discovery, compassion, connectedness, and other “everyday miracles.”

— **Kelly Ann Ellis**, Co-Founder, hotpoet, Inc. and author, *The Hungry Ghost Diner*

The truths expressed in this collection ring like chimes on a light and breezy Texas afternoon. Moving poem by poem, section by section, phelps in *book of common breath* celebrates relationships: her husband and marriage, her father, her mother, her body, her children, and her spiritual connection to all things in powerful poems and brief prose pieces filled with clear mature language and beautiful comparisons, such as “love is a curious creature / that comes in the night — ransacking / the campsite” and “time passes fast / like white lines at night on a desert highway.” Here is a lovely, wise, and kind memoir.

— **Laurence Musgrove**, author, *A Stranger’s Heart* and editor, *Texas Poetry Assignment*



book of common breath

d. ellis phelps

Kelsay Books

# book of common breath

poems by d. ellis phelps