



A Word from the Author

I am Joannetta Hendel and this is my story.

Originally published under a pen name, *God Will Teach Me to Fly* is a fictionalized account of an intensely profound spiritual journey. The names and identities in this book have been altered—not merely to preserve privacy, but because they are totally irrelevant. The struggles of “Andrea Maresco” and her loved ones are universal themes that do not belong to any one woman or any one family. Rather, the characters who populate this text serve only as placeholders—nameless, faceless proxies—who represent the common challenges of hurting people everywhere.

Triggered by the sudden and unexpected death of two-year-old “Benjamin,” Andrea was thrown headlong into a series of life crises. The years that followed were devastating, heartbreaking, debilitating, bewildering, consuming, chaotic, shocking, disgraceful, messy, transformative, regenerative and—ultimately—redemptive. During that season, the written word became her lifeline, her path to healing, and eventually her sacred mandate.

Told from Andrea’s perspective and through the filter of her own personal experiences, the narrative is necessarily slanted in her direction. Were the story retold from the perspective of any one of a number of other characters, it would likely look entirely different. Villains and victims are frequently interchangeable entities—two sides of the same coin.

Called to “count the cost” at a number of significant junctures, lengthy periods of soul-searching have progressively given way to deeper and deeper stages of submission. I’ve been asked to walk a challenging path, to record the process no matter how ugly, to submit to painful levels of transparency and self-disclosure, to stand in the face of overwhelming criticism, and now to completely “own” the story with which I’ve been entrusted.

Joining hands with my namesake, Andrea Maresco, I invite you to journey forward with us into the unknown—and reach beyond the veil into glory. This is Andrea Maresco’s story—but before it was Andrea’s, it was mine.

Joannetta Hendel 2016