

Uttering the Holy

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NY
Q Books™

The New York Quarterly Foundation, Inc.
New York, New York

NYQ Books™ is an imprint of The New York Quarterly Foundation, Inc.

The New York Quarterly Foundation, Inc.
P. O. Box 2015
Old Chelsea Station
New York, NY 10113

www.nyqbooks.org

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First Edition

Set in New Baskerville

Layout and Design by Raymond P. Hammond

Cover Photo ©2011 Steve Thompson | Thompson Creative Services
www.facebook.com/thompsoncreative

Author Photo Courtesy of Amy Clark Studios | www.amyclarkstudios.com

Library of Congress Control Number: 2012933646

ISBN: 978-1-935520-61-0

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D.B. Cooper Dreams of Falling and Wakes to the Taste of River Stone Behind His Uvula

Every time, I wake somewhere
above the trees. It's dark, but I can smell them
below, rippling with rainwinds, their mouths
moving but making no sound. I know they're talking
about me. Once, I heard them singing potlatch
songs so I gave them rafts of greed and they made me
their chief. In that particular tomorrow
I wrapped myself in a tarp of flattened
raindrops and danced with wings strapped to my branches,
their tips the color of stormsetting sun. Peace is floating
near the bank among the rusty needles. I saw it
once, beneath the salmon tongue
of a deer, riding the ripples and disappearing
downstream. Perhaps I'll find it in the next
tomorrow. Nights are bad. It's worse when it rains.
My hip's been drained
of marrow and filled with the currents
of every navigable river west of the Continental Divide.
I forget how it ends. I think I beheld Satan
fall like lightning from heaven.

The Gentler Tortures

on Guy Fawkes Day

When children die—a firing
squad. When children are abducted—the sudden
straightness of rope. When children ask
where mommy went—a torture, pulling

nails from nails, the relentless tug
of equal and opposite motions.
When children live with leaking
noses, when they carry their skin in

their pockets, when they eat flakes
of dandruff and wash it down with the vapor
of low-lying clouds the color of well-chewed
gum—a gentler torture,

the castaway alone, mouth open, collecting drops of rain, believing
that with enough ocean, the tongue will become a raft.

Prayer to St. Margaret of Cortona

for Zoe

It's dark, Margaret, darker than
leafy shadows that hide the faces
of the back-alley murdered, the blankness of new
moon sky, the refuge of centipedes on the other side
of moss. It's dark, Margaret, and I'm tempted

to personify everything as crying—the streetlight
parabola on this pavement reeking
of rain, the empty sky, the leaves disconnected
from home, from branch, from blood and life.
It's dark, Margaret, and I am alone beneath the smoldering

of heaven, the blanket-topped
coals. I am trapped, a starfly stuck on unseen contact paper,
a drowning diver staring watery eyes at the lures
of anglerfish. Morning brings no release, only the ability to see
my captivity. It's dark, Margaret. All my prayers to you, bouncing

off, echolocations to navigate by, return
bruised and well-travelled. No miracle tonight—the lamplight
is still artificial, the moon is still in transit, home is still a taunting
definition, tomorrow is still not today. But, Margaret,
I'll tuck myself into the backseat

and dream of noise and distractions and all of the adiaphora
that clutters these meaningless lives. Life is too sparse
without it. It's dark, Margaret. Wink to me tonight,
slice a crescent into the curtains of heaven, let the moon out
and let me in, overturn this rock and I'll scramble

like a light-drunk potato bug. It's dark, Margaret, and I am alone.
Keep me company with your dirty face and streetlight nimbus.
Mother of hoboes, of prostitutes, the insane, the tramps, the orphaned,
the recessioned, the downlucked, the backwrithing beetles,
luminate.