

STEVEN WINGATE

## HERALD WORDS

Inventing new words for a hidden dictionary: Words that do nothing. Words that mean other words. Words that mean empty phrases. Words that mean all things in all languages. Words that move diagonally across invisible pages. All these await you, defined and cross-examined.

Words to herald the coming of morning. Words to herald the coming of a friend or saint. Words to soothe the welts on your back earned in a moment of too much ardor. Words with nothing to say for themselves. Words without pedigrees, without etymologies. Words that are more than music. Words that bring your soul to frenzy and make you see talking lips on every surface.

These words are the consequence of your sleeplessness. Of nights spent wishing that the lover next to you was not beside you but beside some other who, in a language not yet tongued, was also yourself, always yourself, again yourself.

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## RAPTURE

We discuss the theme of rapture for forty minutes with eyes closed and hands pressed beneath our thighs on cold metal benches. By minute thirty-seven our voices fail us, tantalized by a taste of the forbidden that merely preludes further entrapment. By minute thirty-eight the walls between our thoughts crumble, leaving behind the disappointed legs and torsos of our memory.

Minute thirty-nine brings pause, which you relievedly confuse with cessation. This is your mistake. By announcing yourself ripe for rest you declare your unworthiness to proceed. Those who dream of stopping once they conquer the mountain are unworthy to scale it.

At minute forty you scorn yourself. Your laziness makes you wish yourself a penitent with a leather scourge walking alone through an icy courtyard, promising next time to be sure.