



Speaking with the Angel

From Riverhead Trade

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Nick Hornby...Giles Smith...Helen Fielding...Roddy Doyle...Irvine Welsh...Zadie Smith...Dave Eggers...Robert Harris...Melissa Bank...Patrick Marber...Colin Firth...John O'Farrell

Compiled by bestselling author Nick Hornby and featuring brand new stories from the hottest writers on both sides of the Atlantic, **Speaking with the Angel** is a fresh and funny collection that is sure to be the literary anthology of the year.

Here is a book that was inspired by a very special boy and a very special school. Some money from each copy of **Speaking with the Angel** sold will benefit autism education charities around the world, including The Treehouse School in London, where Nick's son Danny is a student, and the New York Child Learning Institute here in the States. This project is truly a labor of love for Hornby and the other writers involved, many of whom are Nick's friends.

These original first-person narratives come from the most exciting voices in fiction. Melissa Bank gives readers a glimpse into the mind of a modern New Yorker whose still-new relationship is a constant source of surprise in "The Wonder Spot." In Zadie Smith's "I'm the Only One," a young man recalls his strained relationship with his diva-esque sister. Dave Egger's "After I Was Thrown in the River and Before I Drowned," is told from the viewpoint of an unfortunate pit bull. Helen Fielding offers up a new twist on I've fallen and I can't get up in "Luckybitch." And in Nick Hornby's "NippleJesus," a bruiser finds out that guarding modern art is far more hazardous than controlling the velvet ropes at a nightclub. **Speaking with the Angel** also includes stories from Roddy Doyle, Irvine Welsh, Colin Firth, John O'Farrell, Robert Harris, Patrick Marber, and Giles Smith.

Twelve completely new stories, written by twelve undeniably imaginative voices. **Speaking with the Angel** is at turns clever, outrageous, witty, edgy, tender, and wicked. This is what they meant by original.

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Editorial Review

Amazon.com Review

There are lots of reasons to buy *Speaking with the Angel*, an anthology of first-person narratives by bright, young, mostly British literati: these are smart and original stories, none of them previously published elsewhere. What's more, it's for a good cause. Nick Hornby, editor of the collection and author of one of the pieces, has an autistic son, and in a raw and wrenching introduction he stresses the importance of educational institutions to serve such children, who "have no language, and no particular compulsion to acquire it, who are born without the need to explore the world." Accordingly, a portion of each sale benefits autism charities around the world.

Still, this is a collection that stands on its own merits, and requires no act of charity to purchase. In Roddy Doyle's "The Slave," for example, a 42-year-old family man discovers a dead rat on his kitchen floor, and this unwelcome incursion from the natural world plunges him into a midlife crisis. In "Last Requests," Giles Smith introduces us to a prison cook who specializes in, well, last suppers. It's both hilarious and shocking to encounter this egomaniacal chef on the job:

They can have what they like, within reason, up to a maximum of three courses, with coffee or tea and a piece of confectionary or a biscuit if they want it. No alcohol, for obvious reasons. Obviously, you'll get the jokers, like the one who said he wanted a whole roast pig with an apple in its mouth. Or the governor's head, one of them said he wanted.

Elsewhere, in Hornby's own "NippleJesus," a skinhead bouncer becomes a museum guard and falls for the painting he's charged to protect, a crucifixion collage made up of thousands of tiny breasts cut out of porn magazines. The stories in *Speaking with the Angel* all feel up to the minute, abounding with references to politics and popular culture. Yet the obscenity and slang ultimately amount to a form of bluster, an acknowledgement of the intrinsic fragility that all 12 of these narrators share. --Victoria Jenkins

From Publishers Weekly

A virtual who's who of the latest literary guard, this anthology bristles with the crackly talent and confidence of both the newly and the already fabulous. Included are Hornby himself, Melissa Bank, Dave Eggers, Helen Fielding and Zadie Smith, as well as veteran favorites Roddy Doyle and Irvine Welsh. Every story is told in the first person, and the voices are consistent, fresh, particular. Though some tales veer toward the trendy side of topical, each one surprises and entertains. Eggers's "After I Was Thrown in the River and Before I Drowned" is told by a pit bull whose anthropomorphized sensibilities and phraseology are quite lovely. Patrick Marber treads on familiar turf in "Peter Shelley," a defloration/coming-of-age story told in a blend of irreverence and awe that seems new. In "Last Requests," Giles Smith imagines some moments in the career of a Death Row chef who does her best to satisfy the inmates' final culinary wants. And Roddy Doyle further ennoble his reputation with "The Slave," in which an anxious, literate, working-class father suffers a mid-life reckoning with a large dead rat in his kitchen. None of these 12 stories disappoints. (Feb. 6) Forecast: An imaginative cover-featuring painted doll-like ceramic busts of the contributors-will catch browsers' eyes, as will Hornby's name at the top of the jacket. The should sell snappily if prominently displayed, and perhaps more so if it becomes known that some portion of the profits will go to TreeHouse, a British school for autistic children's.

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From Library Journal

Hornby (*High Fidelity*; *About a Boy*) asked colleagues to contribute to this collection, the proceeds of which are to benefit the TreeHouse School, an institution for children with autism. Even without the noble cause, the book is worth purchasing, with new stories from the likes of Melissa Bank, Dave Eggers, Helen Fielding, and Zadie Smith. Robert Harris's "PMQ" is a hilarious send-up of a politician's peccadilloes. Other standouts include Hornby's own "NippleJesus," about a controversial artwork, told from the perspective of a museum security guard, and Roddy Doyle's "The Slave," a stream-of-consciousness tour de force in which a rat in the house is the progenitor of a man's midlife crisis. Highly recommended for public libraries; patrons may be inspired to send Hornby the money the TreeHouse School would have received if they had bought the book. *Christine DeZelar-Tiedman, Univ. of Minnesota Libs., Minneapolis*
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Users Review

From reader reviews:

Christopher Kennedy:

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Ila Robinette:

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Walter Jones:

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