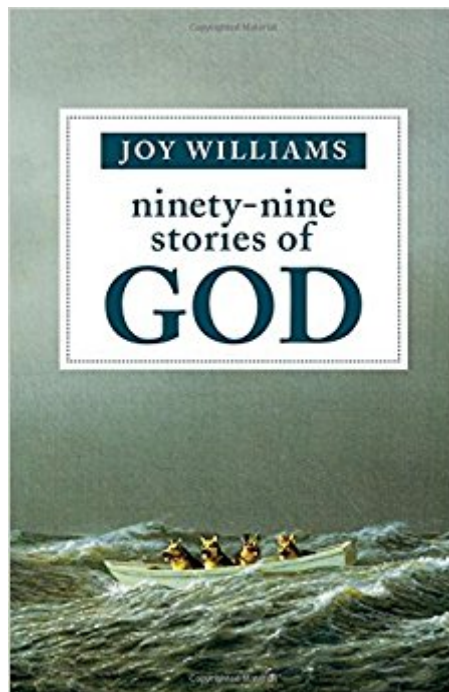


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Ninety-Nine Stories Of God



Synopsis

A New York Times *Notable Book* and a *Best Book of the Year* at *Esquire*, *Seattle Times*, *Minnesota Star Tribune*, *Huffington Post*, and *Publishers Weekly*. From NPR, "quite possibly America's best living writer of short stories" (NPR), *Ninety-Nine Stories of God* finds Joy Williams reeling between the sublime and the surreal, knocking down the barriers between the workaday and the divine. Pulitzer Prize and National Book Award finalist Joy Williams has a one-of-a-kind gift for capturing both the absurdity and the darkness of everyday life. In *Ninety-Nine Stories of God*, she takes on one of mankind's most confounding preoccupations: the Supreme Being. This series of short, fictional vignettes explores our day-to-day interactions with an ever-elusive and arbitrary God. It's the *Book of Common Prayer* as seen through a looking glass—a powerfully vivid collection of seemingly random life moments. The figures that haunt these stories range from Kafka (talking to a fish) to the Aztecs, Tolstoy to Abraham and Sarah, O. J. Simpson to a pack of wolves. Most of Williams's characters, however, are like the rest of us: anonymous strivers and bumbleres who brush up against God in the least expected places or go searching for Him when He's standing right there. The Lord shows up at a hot-dog-eating contest, a demolition derby, a formal gala, and a drugstore, where he's in line to get a shingles vaccination. At turns comic and yearning, lyric and aphoristic, *Ninety-Nine Stories of God* serves as a pure distillation of one of our great artists.

Book Information

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Customer Reviews

Wry and playful, except for when densely allusive and willfully obtuse, *Ninety-Nine Stories of God* is a treasure trove of bafflements and tiny masterpieces. - The New York Times Book Review [The stories in *Ninety-Nine Stories of God* miniaturize the qualities found in Joy Williams's celebrated short stories: concision, jumped connections, singular details, brutal humor. I say "celebrated" because Williams has been writing stories for forty years, and for forty years her literary peers - from Ann Beattie to Raymond Carver, from James Salter to Don DeLillo - have regarded her work with a kind of Masonic fellow-feeling. Yet she remains, in some ways, a difficult, and certainly an original, writer. She writes at a slight angle to the culture, literary and otherwise. Her fiction is easy to follow and hard to fathom; easy to enjoy and harder to absorb. - James Wood, The New Yorker [Q]uietly splendid. . . . I believe in art, and *Ninety-Nine Stories of God* feels like prayer to me. - Boston Globe "Not many writers can launch a premise like 'The Lord was in line at the pharmacy counter waiting to get His shingles shot' without falling into gimmickry, but Williams - long known as a master story writer - twists the scenario to an eerily moving effect. In manipulating our most deeply rooted expectations, shooting them through a prism of irony and wonder, she has created a cockeyed book of common prayer. - San Francisco Chronicle "Baffling and illuminating, witty and disturbing, these 99 religious-flavored vignettes may not tell you why we are here or where we are going, but they do possess the power to entrance. The divine Joy Williams continues to work in mysterious ways. - The Minnesota Star Tribune, Best Fiction of the Year "Sly and wonderful. . . . [Williams is] after some big truths in a few words, stories so short that some of them could fit on Twitter, except they're too smart and not mean enough. - The Seattle Times "A collection of fiction for our fractured times from a modern master - funny, profound and redemptive. - The Seattle Times, Best Books of 2016 "Williams says more in a page-long scene than most can say in a chapter; it's fitting, then, that her very short collection manages to encompass such an eternal theme with wit and grace. - Huffington Post [Williams] is ... a master of momentum; the stories in *Ninety-Nine Stories of God* end and snap, end and snap, their wit yanking you up and dressing you down right when you get a rhythm going. - The Week "Read together, Joy Williams's stories are a humanist manifesto, a celebration of our most mysterious values, desires and prejudices. - Huffington Post, Best Fiction of 2016 "Williams addicts will mainline [*Ninety-Nine Stories of God*]; newcomers should chase the high with last year's *The Visiting Privilege*. - New York Magazine "While Marilyn Robinson (stately, assured) is so often held up as the

major Christian believer in American letters, I would argue that, along with Annie Dillard, Joy Williams is the true seeker. Her stories are probes sent out into the universe. — Oxford American — “Masterly . . . Ms. Williams is her usual funny, irreverent self. — The New York Times — “Joy Williams is one of America’s greatest living writers. — VICE — “Joy Williams is our contemporary O’Connor with a mix of Protestant sacraments . . . and a Zen Koan consciousness.” — The Los Angeles Review of Books — “Every Joy Williams publication is a cause for celebration, and — *Ninety-Nine Stories of God* — shows Williams in her usual biting, insightful, and darkly humorous form. — Electric Literature, Best Short Story Collections of 2016 — “Each story is beautifully strange and meditative in an unexpected but glorious way. . . . — Inarguably inspired, — *Ninety-Nine Stories of God* — is a devotional for modern cynics and believers alike. — Lenny Letter — “Ninety-Nine Stories of God — is gorgeously written, sentence-to-sentence, and arrives in vignettes that are condensed but not constrained, tight but not dry. — The Millions — “Weirdly soothing . . . The best approach is to read — *Ninety-Nine Stories of God* — all in one shot, and then dip in randomly thereafter, at your darkest and dimmest hour, finding solace. — The Ringer — “Each story in this collection shoots like a flare over the abyss of our existential dilemma, flashing the briefest light on the depths below and above. — Eugene Weekly — “Magnificent, imaginative, and moving. — — — Read It Forward — “Much like the divine, Williams — , prose is simple and brutal, thoughtful and haunting. A spare but startling book. — Booklist, STARRED REVIEW — “Admirers of Williams — and anyone who treasures a story well told should be one — will find much to like here. — Kirkus, STARRED REVIEW — “The most beguiling book of the summer is this little collection of 99 very short stories about God. The catch is that the brilliantly twisted Joy Williams is behind the stories, which means the Lord finds himself at a hotdog-eating contest or in line for a shingles vaccination. Mayhem, humor, and death mark this transcendent book. — Publishers Weekly, Best Books of Summer — “[T]hese stories are 100% Williams: funny, unsettling, and mysterious, to be puzzled over and enjoyed across multiple readings. — Publishers Weekly, STARRED REVIEW — “I would follow the trail of Joy Williams — , words — always beautiful, compelling, and so wise — anywhere they led. — Chuck Palahniuk, author of *CHOKE* and *FIGHT CLUB* — “These modern fables and skewed vignettes make the implausible plausible. Compression, as done by Joy Williams, extends the reach of her stories. — Amy Hempel, author of *AT THE GATES OF THE ANIMAL KINGDOM* — “Each story, like living tissue, is a reliquary that makes something splendid of our

most secret agonies and desires. — Darcey Steinke, author of *SISTER GOLDEN HAIR* — “These stories are as full of surprises as a Noah’s Ark filled with mystical beasts, three of each.” — Edmund White, author of *A BOY’S OWN STORY* — “Joy Williams’s *Ninety-Nine Stories of God* reads like a blog-era bible as conceived by Borges, Barthelme, and Mark Twain. No writer alive captures the voices in the post-millennial psychic wilderness like Joy Williams.” — Jerry Stahl, author of *PERMANENT MIDNIGHT* — “The word count of this slender, extraordinary collection belies the density and combustibility of its contents, their midnight hilarity and edgeless reach. Joy Williams is our feral philosopher.” — Karen Russell, author of *VAMPIRES IN THE LEMON GROVE*

Joy Williams is the author of four novels, four previous story collections, and the book of essays *Ill Nature*. She has been nominated for the National Book Award, The Pulitzer Prize, and the National Book Critics Circle Award. Her most recent title is *The Visiting Privilege: New & Collected Stories*. She lives in Tucson, Arizona, and Laramie, Wyoming.

Beautiful weird and revelatory flash fictions and nonfictions, will not disappoint any fan of this author. Reminds me in form of Sarah Ruhl’s *100 Essays I Don’t Have Time to Write*, only the individual pieces are shorter and even more distilled. Brilliant, funny, elliptical but never pretentious, offhandedly devastating. If you are looking for an “inspirational” collection of traditional stories about God, look elsewhere.

I think she took full advantage of this opportunity between stories and novels to risk following her muse down a less-traveled creative path. It’s certainly a ‘novel’ contribution to the literary world, and I think a memorable one. (I must add that I enjoy rereading it on the cardio machines at the gym, so I am quite familiar with it, yet it keeps drawing me back!)

There is some beautiful writing here, but unfortunately, most of it amounts to little. These very short pieces, some just a sentence or two long, come across more like writing prompts than prose itself. This is a shame, since Williams touches on some clever ideas and sketches the outlines of some intriguing characters -- I was left wanting much much more. The title is also a bit of a misnomer, and somewhat gimmicky. At least half of the “stories” have no theological or spiritual component, unless one is willing to really stretch the terms. And while some of the story-lets share themes, most are discrete entities.

I couldn't stop reading this until the end, even though none of the "stories" is much longer than a page or two. Some are only a paragraph or even a sentence. Wry, but not laugh-out-loud funny; thoughtful but sometimes baffling and always strange. Never dull. New York Times named it one of the Top Fifty Novels of 2016.

I wish it were titled otherwise because, as is, it suggests religiosity, which it is not. I would not have bought this book if I hadn't read a review that clarified it as complex engaging snippets/essays that ponder the "deeper meanings." Wonderfully provocative and deeply thought.

Outstanding stories of . . . God? or ??? Is God in everything or in our lives at all times? The stories will make you think and search.

Delightful, witty and wise reflection on some of the best writers of the last half of the previous century. Fast read. Full of delightful twists on the tropes of an international cast of favorite writers.

Joy Williams' stories are always a treat, polished puzzlers that help keep me alive to the fact that we seldom know completely what's going on. These extra short pieces are fine microscopic examples of how her unusual mind and writing work.

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