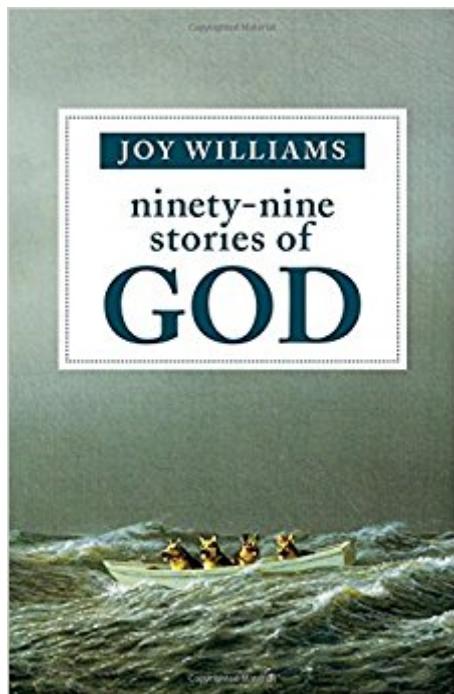


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# Ninety-Nine Stories Of God



## Synopsis

A New York TimesÂ Notable Book and a Best Book of the Year at Esquire,Â Seattle Times, Minnesota Star Tribune,Â Huffington Post, andÂ Publishers Weekly. From âœquite possibly Americaâ™s best living writer of short storiesâ• (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 mankindâ™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. Itâ™s the Book of Common Prayer as seen through a looking glassâ•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 Williamsâ™s characters, however, are like the rest of us: anonymous strivers and bumbler who brush up against God in the least expected places or go searching for Him when Heâ™s standing right there. The Lord shows up at a hot-dog-eating contest, a demolition derby, a formal gala, and a drugstore, where heâ™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

â œWry and playful, except for when densely allusive and willfully obtuse,â Ninety-Nine Stories of Godâ is a treasure trove of bafflements and tiny masterpieces.â • - The New York Times Book Reviewâ œ[The stories inâ Ninety-Nine Stories of God]â miniaturize the qualities found in Joy Williamsâ ™s celebrated short stories: concision, jumped connections, singular details, brutal humor. I say â œcelebratedâ • becauseâ Williamsâ has been writing stories for forty years, and for forty years her literary peersâ • from Ann Beattie to Raymond Carver, from James Salter to Don DeLilloâ • 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.â • - James Wood, The New Yorkerâ œ[Q]uietly splendid. . . . I believe in art, and Ninety-Nine Stories of God feels like prayer to me.â • - Boston Globeâ œNot many writers can launch a premise like â œThe Lord was in line at the pharmacy counter waiting to get His shingles shotâ • without falling into gimmickry, but Williamsâ • long known as a master story writerâ • 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.â • - San Francisco Chronicleâ œBaffling 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.â • - The Minnesota Star Tribune, Best Fiction of the Yearâ œSly 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.â • - The Seattle Timesâ œA collection of fiction for our fractured times from a modern master â • funny, profound and redemptive.â • - The Seattle Times, Best Books of 2016â œWilliams 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.â • - Huffington Postâ œ[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.â • - The Weekâ œRead together, Joy Williamsâ ™ stories are a humanist manifesto, a celebration of our most mysterious values, desires and prejudices.â • - Huffington Post, Best Fiction of 2016â œWilliams addicts will mainline [Ninety-Nine Stories of God]; newcomers should chase the high with last yearâ ™s The Visiting Privilege.â • - New York Magazineâ œWhile Marilynne 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.â • - Oxford Americanâ œMasterly . . . Ms.

Williams is her usual funny, irreverent self.â • - The New York Timesâ œJoy Williams is one of America's greatest living writers.â • - VICEâ œ"Joy Williams is our contemporary O'Connor with a mix of Protestant sacraments . . . and a Zen Koan consciousness."â • - The Los Angeles Review of Booksâ œEvery Joy Williams publication is a cause for celebration, andÂ Ninety-Nine Stories of GodÂ shows Williams in her usual biting, insightful, and darkly humorous form.â • - Electric Literature, Best Short Story Collections of 2016â œEach story is beautifully strange and meditative in an unexpected but glorious way. . . .Â Inarguably inspired,Â Ninety-Nine Stories of GodÂ is a devotional for modern cynics and believers alike.â • - Lenny Letterâ œNinety-Nine Stories of GodÂ is gorgeously written, sentence-to-sentence, and arrives in vignettes that are condensed but not constrained, tight but not dry.â • - The Millionsâ œWeirdly soothing . . . The best approach is to readÂ Ninety-Nine Stories of GodÂ all in one shot, and then dip in randomly thereafter, at your darkest and dimmest hour, finding solace.â • - The Ringerâ œEach 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.â • - Eugene Weeklyâ œMagnificent, imaginative, and moving.Â â • - Read It Forwardâ œMuch like the divine, Williamsâ ™ prose is simple and brutal, thoughtful and haunting. A spare but startling book.â • - Booklist, STARRED REVIEWâ œAdmirers of Williamsâ • and anyone who treasures a story well told should be oneâ • will find much to like here.â • - Kirkus, STARRED REVIEWâ œThe 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.â • - Publishers Weekly, Best Books of Summerâ œ[T]hese stories are 100% Williams: funny, unsettling, and mysterious, to be puzzled over and enjoyed across multiple readings.â • - Publishers Weekly, STARRED REVIEWâ œI would follow the trail of Joy Williamsâ ™s wordsâ • always beautiful, compelling, and so wiseâ • anywhere they led.â • - Chuck Palahniuk, author of CHOKE and FIGHT CLUBâ œThese modern fables and skewed vignettes make the implausible plausible. Compression, as done by Joy Williams, extends the reach of her stories.â • - Amy Hempel, author of AT THE GATES OF THE ANIMAL KINGDOMâ œEach story, like living tissue, is a reliquary that makes something splendid of our most secret agonies and desires.â • - Darcey Steinke, author of SISTER GOLDEN HAIRâ œThese stories are as full of surprises as a Noahâ ™s Ark filled with mystical beasts, three of each.â • - Edmund White, author of A BOY'S OWN STORYâ œJoy Williamsâ ™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.â • - Jerry Stahl,

author of PERMANENT MIDNIGHTâ œThe 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.â • - 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 *III Nature*. Sheâ™s 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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