JOY WILLIAMS

ninety-nine stories of GOD
For DD
Contents

1. POSTCARD
2. NOCHE
3. AUBADE
4. CAVITY
5. NEVERTHELESS
6. SEE THAT YOU REMEMBER
7. NOT HIS BEST
8. HEDGEHOG
9. CLEAN
10. WET
11. ARRANGEMENT
12. NO
13. MOMS
14. COZY
15. STORY
16. IF PICKED OR UPROOTED THESE BEAUTIFUL FLOWERS WILL DISAPPEAR
17. DRESSER
18. THIS IS NOT A MAZE
19. PERHAPS A KIND OF CAKE?
20. THIS TIME
21. COAT
22. SOME DIFFERENCE
23. AND YOU ARE . . . 
24. NID DUW OND DIM (WITHOUT GOD THERE IS NOTHING)
25. VERACITY
26. SATISFACTION
27. A GOOD REASON
28. ABANDON ALL HOPE
29. IGNORANCE
30. SATAN'S LEATHERY WING
31. SOCIETY
32. SHAKEN
33. IRREDUCIBLE
34. TRAGEDY HAS OBLIGATIONS
35. JUST A RUMOR
36. DEAREST
37. THE BRAIN
38. ACTUALLY
39. BURIED IN COLORADO ALL ALONE
40. SEÑOR XÓLOTL
41. JAIL
42. PRETTY MUCH THE SAME, THEN
43. HER EYES WERE SET RATHER CLOSE TOGETHER, WHICH GAVE HER AN URGENT AIR
44. THE INDIVIDUALIST
45. NUMBERS
46. PREFERENCE
47. GET OUT AS EARLY AS YOU CAN
48. PARTICIPATION
49. NAKED MIND
50. BUICK LESABRE
51. SIGNIFICANCE
52. DOLL HOUSE
53. PEGGY
54. DIVINE
55. NEGLECT
56. GIRAFFE
57. DEW
58. SARTRE TO CAMUS
59. LOOKING GOOD
60. PARTY
61. MUSEUM
62. ESSENTIAL ENOUGH
63. APORROPOS OF NOTHING
64. I PITY THE FOOL
65. DULL
66. REBIRTH
67. FORGIVENESS
68. ) (  
69. INOCULUM
70. DRIVESHAFT
71. FOG
72. WHALE
73. A LITTLE PRAYER
74. WALK-IN
75. TRANSITION
76. WHATEVER IS HAPPENING?
77. ELEPHANTS NEVER FORGET GOD
78. THE FOURTH WIFE
79. EXAMPLE
80. OPPORTUNITY
81. BUSINESSWOMAN
82. POLYURETHANE
83. CRAZY INJUNS
84. WINTER
85. EARLY PRACTICE
86. INFIDELITY
87. PLOT
88. A FLAWED OPINION
89. PHEW
90. COMPLINE
91. THIS IS THE WAY THAT NIGHT
     PASSES BY
92. DISTINCTION
93. FATHER AND SONS
94. IF YOU FEEL YOU MUST
95. SIBLING
96. PLENARY
97. BREAD
98. A NEW ARRANGEMENT
99. THE DARKLING THRUSH
A woman who adored her mother, and had mourned her death every day for years now, came across some postcards in a store that sold antiques and various other bric-a-brac. The postcards were of unexceptional scenes, but she was drawn to them and purchased several of wild beaches and forest roads. When she got home, she experienced an overwhelming need to send a card to her mother.

What she wrote was not important. It was the need that was important.

She put the card in an envelope and sent it to her mother’s last earthly address, a modest farm-house that had long since been sold and probably sold again.

Within a week she received a letter, the writing on the envelope unmistakably her mother’s. Even the green ink her mother had favored was the same.
The woman never opened the letter, nor did she send any other postcards to that address.

The letter, in time, though only rumored to be, caused her children, though grown, much worry.
The breeder of the black German shepherds said her kennel was in Sedona, a place known far and wide for its good vibrations, its harmonic integrity. But the kennel was actually in Jerome, thirty miles away, an unnerving ghost town set above a vast pit from which copper ore had been extracted. The largest building in Jerome was the old sanatorium, now derelict. The town’s historian insisted that it had served all the population in the town’s heyday, not just the diseased and troubled, and that babies had even been born there.

In any case, the dog coming from Jerome rather than Sedona was telling, people thought.

Another something that could be the basis of the dog’s behavior was the fact that her mistress always wore sunglasses, day and night. Like everybody else, the dog never got to see her eyes. When the woman
had people over, she placed a big bowl of sunglasses outside the front door and everyone put on a pair before entering. It was easier than locking the dog in the bedroom.

NOCHE
A noted humanist was invited to take part in a discussion about the dangers and opportunities that would arise if intelligent life forms on other planets were discovered. His remarks, though no one disagreed with them, became so heated that the producers later, in light of what had happened, decided to edit him out of the program.

There was consensus that discovering intelligent life forms on other planets was probable and even essential to the human endeavor, but much of the conversation concerned whether any life form discovered would hold a candle to human intelligence and creativity.

The humanist, who was also a noted scholar, argued that nothing could be discovered that could write a symphony, as so many of our brilliant composers had done, or be capable of appreciating the
symphony. The ability to *appreciate* the symphony seemed to him quite as important as the actual composition of it.

The humanist/scholar became quite emotional in conceiving of the world devoid of human beings, which was a possibility brought on by one disaster or another, due, it must be said, to our own actions. This would be the worst thing he could imagine—worlds devoid of human beings, even if these worlds were populated by other intelligent and enterprising life forms.

After the taping, the humanist/scholar, whose name was Charles Thaxter Ormand, the acronym of which, in the ever-evolving and vibrant field of text messaging, would be *check this out*, retired for lunch to one of the city’s many small, fine restaurants. He ordered that day’s special. When it was brought to him, whole and beautifully prepared and presented, he took a moment to study it before consuming it.

To his discomfort, he detected from the plate the faint sound of the most beautiful music. It was exquisite, joyous yet heartbreaking, a delicate furling of gratitude and praise gradually diminishing, then gone.
Horrified, he continued to look at the speckled trout that, according to the waiter, had been taken mere hours before from its mountain stream. Then, with a cry, he rushed into the kitchen, where he attacked both the waiter and the chef with a variety of heavy utensils before he was subdued and taken away for observation at the nearest psychiatric facility. His ravings about the trout being no more appreciated than the ravings of any of the other lunatics there.

AUBADE
Passing Clouds was the brand of cigarette favored by the great English contralto Kathleen Ferrier. According to one of her early teachers, her magnificent voice was attributed to “a wonderful cavity at the back of her throat.” This was the only explanation given for the purity and power of her voice.

Near the end of her brief life, Ferrier sang Mahler’s symphony “The Song of the Earth.” We die, but life is fresh, eternally fresh, was Mahler’s ecstatic conviction. Nature renews herself year after year . . . for ever and ever.

Ferrier was in tears when she concluded “The Song of the Earth,” so distraught that she omitted the final \textit{ewig}, the final \textit{ever}. 
At some point, Kafka became a vegetarian.

Afterward, visiting an aquarium in Berlin, he spoke to the fish through the glass.

“Now at last I can look at you in peace, I don’t eat you anymore.”

NEVERTHELESS
You know that dream of Tolstoy’s where he’s in some sort of bed contraption suspended between the abyss below and the abyss above? You know that one? Well, I gave it to him, the Lord said.

SEE THAT YOU REMEMBER
Franz Kafka once called his writing a form of prayer. He also reprimanded the long-suffering Felice Bauer in a letter: “I did not say that writing ought to make everything clearer, but instead makes everything worse; what I said was that writing makes everything clearer and worse.”

He frequently fretted that he was not a human being and that what he bore on his body was not a human head. Once he dreamt that as he lay in bed, he began to jump out the open window continuously at quarter-hour intervals.

“Then trains came, one after another they ran over my body, outstretched on the tracks, deepening and widening the two cuts in my neck and legs.”

I didn’t give him that one, the Lord said.