

The End of the World Notwithstanding: Stories I Lived to Tell

Janna Goodwin

Travelers' Tales (Apr 19, 2021)

Softcover \$16.99 (200pp)

978-1-60952-201-8

The humorous essays of Janna Goodwin's *The End of the World Notwithstanding* concern the joys, perils, and absurdities of being alive on a small blue planet that's whirling its way through space.

Based on a solo comedy performance, Goodwin's stories cover encounters with fire, a tornado, snakes, stinging insects, wild boars, and creepy men with sex on their minds. While appearing lighthearted, they're laced with the terror about what could happen. Goodwin's mind, gifted with a "heightened sense of risk," goes where most minds don't (or won't admit to going), from killer garage doors, to a cataclysm predicted for the Pacific Northwest, from which she expects a tsunami to engulf the motel where she's on a three-day vacation. Underlying all is the inconceivable thought that she will one day cease to exist. "Surviving is harder than a person might think," Goodwin writes. "Life is everywhere on this planet—if nowhere else in the universe—and it all wants to eat you."

A Wyoming native, Goodwin has an ear for the spicy, sagebrush twang in the speech of dusty cowboys. Her first story covers a solitary writing retreat near the Medicine Bow National Forest, where she felt hog-tied by indecision as to whether to leave or stay as a large column of smoke bore down. Her frantic questions got one response: "Idunno." Even Goodwin's husband's expected approach is startling: "I jolt violently, emitting a yip like a nearsighted, coked-up Chihuahua who catches a glimpse of itself in the hallway mirror." While such descriptions are hilarious, they also invite compassion.

The End of the World Notwithstanding is a quirky essay collection in which people, and life itself, are absurd. Goodwin's travels result in exuberant gratitude and suggest a possible cure for anxiety: laughter.

KRISTINE MORRIS (May / June 2021)

Disclosure: This article is not an endorsement, but a review. The publisher of this book provided free copies of the book to have their book reviewed by a professional reviewer. No fee was paid by the publisher for this review. Foreword Reviews only recommends books that we love. Foreword Magazine, Inc. is disclosing this in accordance with the Federal Trade Commission's 16 CFR, Part 255.