



The Visiting Privilege: New and Collected Stories

By Joy Williams

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The Visiting Privilege: New and Collected Stories By Joy Williams

The legendary writer's first collection in more than ten years—and, finally, the definitive one. A literary event of the highest order.

Joy Williams has been celebrated as a master of the short story for four decades, her renown passing as a given from one generation to the next even in the shifting landscape of contemporary writing. And at long last the incredible scope of her singular achievement is put on display: thirty-three stories drawn from three much-lauded collections, and another thirteen appearing here for the first time in book form. Forty-six stories in all, far and away the most comprehensive volume in her long career, showcasing her crisp, elegant prose, her dark wit, and her uncanny ability to illuminate our world through characters and situations that feel at once peculiar and foreign and disturbingly familiar. Virtually all American writers have their favorite Joy Williams stories, as do many readers of all ages, and each one of them is available here.

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The Visiting Privilege: New and Collected Stories By Joy Williams Bibliography

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Editorial Review

Review

“By one of the most celebrated American short-story writers. . . these forty-six stories are powerful, important, compassionate, and full of dark humor. This is a book that will be reread with admiration and love many times over.” —Nicole Jones, *Vanity Fair*

“This volume traces Joy Williams’s journey to sui generis master. Her nearest cousin among American writers is Don DeLillo, but only because, as with him, nobody writes sentences like she does. . . . Though she treats common states—parenthood, pet ownership, alcoholism—Williams eschews the realist story writer’s bromide that in the ordinary we find the extraordinary, because there’s nothing ordinary about her work.” —Christian Lorentzen, *New York*

“A fifty-course, full-tilt tasting menu of misanthropy and guile. This career-spanning collection solidifies Ms. Williams’s position as a thorny American writer of this first rank. Dire circumstances blend with offbeat wit in Ms. Williams’s work. The mental heat they give off places them at the far end of the Scoville scale, yet they are plump with soul and real feeling.” —Dwight Garner, “The Top Books of 2015,” *The New York Times*

“Such brilliant and depressing fiction that after I read it I was nervous to ever try writing again. . . . Hope is very damaged in these pages, but you will find yourself laughing out loud as you muffle a gasp of crippled optimism. I am a real Johnny-come-lately to Joy Williams, but since finishing this new collection I have run out and bought every book she ever wrote. You should, too.” —John Waters, *The San Francisco Chronicle*

“Joy Williams has long been one of America’s greatest living writers, and *The Visiting Privilege* might [be] the best book of the year. Her sentences are as sharp and precise as scalpel incisions, and her ability to turn the real beautifully surreal is second to none. . . . If you have yet to read Williams’s work, there is no better place to start than this book, which collects stories from across her decades of groundbreaking work alongside several new stories.” —Lincoln Michael, Editor-in-Chief, *Electric Literature*

“[This] is powerfully united by Joy Williams’s profound gift for illuminating, with compassion and mordant humor, characters on the jagged edge of grief and spiritual ruin. . . . The search for mercy is at odds with a landscape that is increasingly merciless—and yet hope remains [and]the stories are rich with tenderness. . . . *The Visiting Privilege* is also laced with Williams’s trademark cutting wit, which provides a small release, as of steam escaping through a pressure valve, while also pushing the stories’ dark absurdity.” —Laura Van Den Berg, *O Magazine*

“Immaculate artistry [and] one of the most fearless, abyss-embracing literary projects our literature has seen [with] the sort of helpless laughter that erupts when a profound moral project is conducted with such blinding literary craft. . . . If Williams keeps writing fiction—ruthless, hilarious work that holds our human folly to the fire—the novel and the short story won’t perish anytime soon.” —Ben Marcus, *The New York Times Book Review*

“One of the most important and radical books published this fall. And Joy Williams has been doing it for decades. . . . She will [now] be read more than any point in her career. This is a great thing, because looking around, we need Joy Williams more than ever.” —Shane Jones, *Vice*

“Unquestionably, the short story collection of this year. . . . Williams has been one of the great living individualists and masters of the short story [and] lionized in America’s innermost literary circles. . . . His work can be stark, brutal, creepy, tragic and hilarious, [and] all forty-six stories here are magnificently written.” —Jeff Simon, *The Buffalo News*

“Williams is brilliant in her commentary. . . . To enter *The Visiting Privilege*—a mammoth, definitive collection of her stories—is to smack face-first into astonishment: best words, best order. But more: One is constantly aware of a taut sensibility infusing them. Dispassionate but not *uncompassionate*, this steady, Flaubertian presence, both witness and engine, demonstrates (beyond ‘mere’ mastery of craft) one sublime measure of literary art. . . . Seamlessly linked, precise, forceful, they spear the reading ear, piercing to hard, weird truth. They propose by their very existence—as much as by the story-freight they deliver—that we readers follow their lead and drop all artifice.” —Joan Frank, *The San Francisco Chronicle*

“The year of Joy Williams. . . [She] writes some of the most memorably unclassifiable fiction out there [and] can move from precise realism to disquieting surrealism in a moment’s notice; she’s an incomparable figure in American literature right now.” —*Vol. 1 Brooklyn*

“Hard and bleak and somehow still biting funny, a kind of nihilistic long-form standup-comedy routine. Except you should sit down for it, and probably keep implements of self-harm out of reach.” —Ben Marcus, *The New Yorker*

“This is a writer who gets under your skin [with] the unadorned truth. . . . She’s absorbed the American experience and has expressed its sorrows and defeats, as well as its tenacity, with and directness all her own. Especially when it comes to short form fiction. Many of her stories have achieved iconic status over the years. . . . Refreshingly, many of the characters in Williams’s stories realize it’s time to grow up, to *step* up, even those living amid disaster.” —Debra Gwartney, *The Oregonian*

“*The Visiting Privilege* assembles stories from as long ago as 1966 and as recently as this summer. . . . This is a decades-long stack of stories about people whose balance may never again tippy-toe on the ocean floor. . . . When I was young I loved Joy Williams because I thought she was so hilarious. When I got older I loved her because she refused to look away.” —Choire Sicha, *Slate*

“Unbelievably funny. . . . The mental heat [these stories] give off places them at the far end of the Scoville scale. *The Visiting Privilege* is a fifty-course, full-tilt tasting menu of misanthropy and guile [and] solidifies her position as a thorny American writer of the first rank. . . . This is a writer who sees deeply into the hearts of things [and her] stories transmit a deep feeling for life’s transience.” —Dwight Garner, *The New York Times*

“[This] publication is sure to be celebrated. . . . Her books have been finalists for major prizes, including the National Book Award and the Pulitzer Prize, because she is a fiery writer with a sharp humor and a dark energy and her sentences are weird, funny, and full of emotion. . . . These stories have almost a biblical ambience [and] at times they seem to lift into the realm of tale or myth. . . . Williams writes about the enormous, inconvenient human capacity for love, the weighty responsibility of it, the loneliness of it.” —Deb Olin Unferth, *Bookforum*

“Williams is a flawless writer, and *The Visiting Privilege* is a perfect book. . . the rare collection that doesn’t have a single story, even a single paragraph, that’s less than brilliant, and it proves that Williams is quite possibly America’s best living writer of short stories. . . . Even in its darkest moments, [it] is filled with a kind of hope, even a perverse kind of joy.” —Michael Schaub, NPR

“Our first real opportunity to stand back from Williams’s particular accomplishments and to see her genius whole. . . . Her extravagantly original artistic gifts aside, Williams has never seemed more in accord with the needs of her time.” —Jonathan Dee, *Harper’s*

“*The Visiting Privilege* cements Williams’s position not merely as one of the great writers of her generation, but as our pre-eminent bard of humanity’s insignificance.” —Dan Kois, *The New York Times Magazine*

“A compilation of rare richness, complexity, and abundance. . . . Encompassing writing from the 1970s to the present, this book is a savory feast. . . . Dissolution and morality [are] old themes for Williams: the work that grief is, the inevitability of exiting alone, the discombobulation of once-sharp intellect, even unintended legacy. . . . Her darkness is dappled with light.” —Laura Collins-Hughes, *The Boston Globe*

“She has often been anointed as the literary heir to Anton Chekhov and Flannery O’Connor, but Williams’s voice is most emphatically her own. Her stories begin realistically enough, then permute into hallucinatory fairy tales, as grim as anything in Grimm, but also grimly funny. Some adjective, as proprietary as ‘Kafkaesque,’ is needed for stories in which murder, addiction and madness are discussed so dispassionately. The pieces are chilling, but never smug about their own seriousness. There is a deep pleasure to be had, and a kind of explosive surprise, in Williams’s unflinching alchemy. . . . All forty-six stories are spooky and unsentimental. . . . with thirteen superb new stories.” —Lisa Zeidner, *The Washington Post*

“To read Joy Williams is to be arrested in a state of relentless awe and wonderment. . . . [Her] preternatural intelligence, coupled with a scorching wit and an inability to bore or commit an unoriginal thought to the page, has made her a cult hero. . . . Why we aren’t worshipping Joy Williams in public squares is beyond me. With this collection we should be.” —Elissa Schappell, *Vanity Fair*

“An influential and long-revered body of work [by] a wizard of elegant economy, fearless wit, and sly surprise. Edgy, seductive concision is one jet to her stories’ appeal; another is her uncanny ability to illuminate hidden pockets of the human heart.” —Lisa Shea, *Elle*

“A mighty retrospective embracing four decades of daring literary excellence, precisely calibrated imagination, and uncompromising candor [by] a virtuoso with a subversive, sure-footed sense of humor and an unsparing perspective on the marauding strangeness of the human condition. . . . Jolting, tonic, and valiant in their embrace of the ludicrous and the tragic, Williams’ masterful stories belong in every fiction collection.” —Donna Seaman, *Booklist*

“Four dozen stories by one of the form’s greatest practitioners. . . . If you want to see how the pros do it—or simply want to read some of the best stories written today—you need look no further.” —*Kirkus Reviews*

“The escape artists at the heart of Joy Williams’ fiction, in the face of each fresh catastrophe, are like swimmers waiting to get on with the drowning, their thinking running in odd and unemployable directions and their weaknesses a terrible precinct they recklessly frequent. But even as they worry, with good reason, that their hearts will turn them in, they know we’re saved not because we’re worthy but because we’re loved. These are fiercely dark and funny stories.” —Jim Shepard

“Joy Williams stories are uncanny, unsettling and completely original. It’s hard to catch her in the act of doing what she does so well, or even to describe it: in my view, she disorients us in order to renew our sense of how genuinely strange the world is. She is one of the great American short story writers.” —Jay McInerney

“Joy Williams has been enlightening us for a very long time about the short story but now in her collected stories we see the breadth and power of her vision. This is an important moment for American writing.”

—Thomas McGuane

About the Author

JOY WILLIAMS is the author of four novels—the most recent, *The Quick and the Dead*, was a runner-up for the Pulitzer Prize in 2001—and three other collections of stories, as well as *Ill Nature*, a book of essays that was a finalist for the National Book Critics Circle Award. Among her many honors are the Rea Award for the Short Story and the Strauss Living Award from the American Academy of Arts and Letters. She was elected to the Academy in 2008. She lives in Tucson, Arizona, and Laramie, Wyoming.

Users Review

From reader reviews:

Michael Milliner:

Why don't make it to be your habit? Right now, try to prepare your time to do the important act, like looking for your favorite book and reading a publication. Beside you can solve your long lasting problem; you can add your knowledge by the guide entitled *The Visiting Privilege: New and Collected Stories*. Try to make the book *The Visiting Privilege: New and Collected Stories* as your pal. It means that it can to become your friend when you truly feel alone and beside those of course make you smarter than before. Yeah, it is very fortunated for you personally. The book makes you more confidence because you can know every little thing by the book. So , let us make new experience along with knowledge with this book.

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