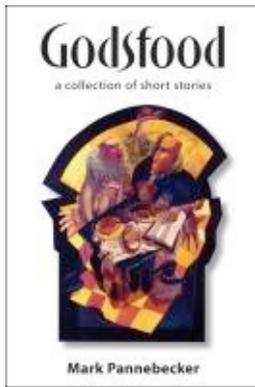


Godsfood

a collection of short stories



Mark Pannebecker



*This collection of short stories is a tasty morsel that rests softly on the palate and an important part of every meal. Sometimes the stories leave a lump in the throat and other times a smile on the lips. From the haunted past of Sylvia in "The Isle of Shoals" to the lovable bear living The Big City in "The Adventures of Sparky the Bear," **Godsfood** delivers a cornucopia of diverse writing and unique characters.*

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First Edition

GODSFOOD

Upon my arrival at the heavenly gates, our Lord God and Father stopped me and this was our conversation. Let no man add or remove a single word (except my editor who art wiser than I on these matters).

“What did you bring?”

“Love in my heart.”

“That’s fine, that’s fine, that’s very good, but it won’t feed the multitudes.”

“I bring. . . I bring. . . I guess I didn’t bring anything.”

”No tuna casserole?”

”What?”

”No roasted mutton? No vegetable dish?”

”Uh, no.”

”No edible roots, or savory fruits?”

”No, nothing.”

”How about a nice appetizer, maybe some antipasto?”

”What are you talking about?”

“Didn’t your loved ones bury you with a potluck dish to bring to the afterlife?”

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“Nobody believes that anymore.”

“You Christians get everything wrong.”

“But I’m Jewish.”

“Yes, well, that book of yours should spend less time on the design of a robe and more on quick, easy dishes to bring into the afterlife. We haven’t had a decent meal up here for centuries. Now the Egyptians, they knew how to throw an afterlife buffet. You should have seen the food they brought. Even the peasants brought at least a loaf of bread.”

“Unleavened?”

“What difference does that make?”

“I thought—“

“Never mind.”

“I’m sorry. I didn’t know. If I knew I was supposed to bring food, I would have gladly brought something kosher. I owned a deli, you know.”

“Did you?”

“You didn’t know?”

“Of course not.”

“If food is that important here, why weren’t we told?”

“I thought you were.”

“No, we weren’t—I mean, I don’t *think* we were.”

“Ah-ha!”

“Well, you could have made it clearer.”

“Maybe. It’s just that we get so busy up here what with all the arrangements we need to make. And you’d be surprised how complicated the seating alone can be. Just imagine a cannibal sitting next to a vegan. And then there’s the linen, silverware. . . it gets quite crazy sometimes. Anyway,

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we meant to tell you, but by the time we noticed that the majority of newly departed were coming empty-handed and we formed a sub-committee in the catering department and we discussed the issue and voted on it and, well, you understand. The time passed so quickly that by the time we adjourned for lunch it was—well, *now*.”

“So I can’t get in because my loved ones forgot to pack a lunch?”

“Well, we have to start someplace. This is getting out of hand. You don’t understand, since the only people bringing food anymore are members of small tribes in Africa and South America, we just can’t accommodate all the millions of people who arrive with their hands in their pocket. So to speak. Case in point: during the 1300’s, we even had a waiting line—and that never happens here. And did anybody bring food then? No. And dessert? Forget it—we didn’t have an orange sorbet in the house. We don’t even get sacrifices anymore and that really puts a dent in our pans.”

“Isn’t there something I can do to get in?”

“Well, yes. There is. Providing you haven’t sinned.”

“I tried not—“

“Good enough. Now, here’s what we’re going to do. We’re going to send you back down to inform the people of the world that they must start bringing their own food to the afterlife. We’re okay on glassware, but we do need some plates—better add bowls to that, too. I’ll tell you what, just make sure they bring the whole kitchen, stove and all. We have a storage facility you wouldn’t believe. Got all that?”

“Am I worthy of such a mission?”

“What? Of course you are. You owned a deli, right?”

“Yes.”

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“Oh Lord, should I change my name?”

“Why? You don’t like the one you have?”

“Well, yes, it’s fine, I just thought I might need some symbolic change.”

“Don’t be silly. Now go. Go forth and send—“

“Spread?”

“Spread. Yes. Spread the word. And multiply. My son. And let not fasting tempt you. Yeah, add something about fasting, too. They get so used to not eating down there, they’ll never think of bringing food up here.”

“You want me to write this down, my Lord?”

“What do you mean, like a menu?”

“No, like a sacred text.”

“Sure.”

“But how shall I write your sacred words, my Lord? Will you tell me what to write? Will an angel guide my hand?”

“Okay, sure.”

“And then I can enter?”

“Have you been listening?”

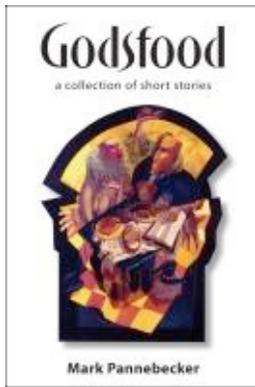
“Yes, Lord.”

“Good. Now go. Before I do something wrathful, like cook you in the fires of hell or something.”

I left. And I have returned. And the conversation I recorded, and now speak unto you is for your salvation. And every word was the word of God guided by the hand of an angel. And heed well its meaning, for the Lord our God is a hungry God, and a generous Host with a multitude of mouths to

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feed. So bury your dead with ample food supplies lest ye be burned and roasted in the open fires of hell and be the feast served up with a Béarnaise sauce to the ones that follow the word of God. And be not the lamb chop of heaven, but an honored guest at the table of the Lord where God's golden throne (He's still partial to gold) sits at the head of Paradise's banquet table, toasting all for all eternity. And thou shall bring foods of all kinds fit for a King. I am the anointed ambassador of the Lord's Kitchen and He has commanded me. And you shall study the sacred culinary arts and develop thy holy palate. Avoid the wrath of God by offering to Him who is the Headwaiter of Heaven, the Wine Steward of Zion, He who checks the coat of Chaos, He who bussed Beelzebub straight into the smoking section of Hell, Him who is the Host of Eden, the Chef of City Celestial, offer Him all your worldly foods when you die (sans any broccoli dish). Amen.



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