

## Notes

from Ginger

<http://www.songsofmann.com/notes>

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# God the Snapping Turtle

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Don't argue with a toddler. Don't even try.

It's his usual routine. The boy, barely 3 years old, wants to delay sleep as long as possible. The familiar litany of "go potty, need a drink, want my blankie, give me a kiss, sing me a song," comes to a merciful end. Only one card left in his deck, and is going to play it.

"Mom?"

"Yes, honey?"

"The shadows are talking to me again."

It works. I sit down next to him. "Shadows? What do the shadows look like?"

"Oh, they are over there," he points his finger to the wall. "They look dark. But they want to be my friend. But . . . they are scary."

He wins. Like a riot of zombie stalkers, the week's SyFy horror ads replay themselves in my head. Shadows? What shadows? Ghouls? Demons? Congressmen? Who and what wants my son? And then I start to wonder what the kid watched on TV today, at the same time realizing that he won't tell me, even if I ask.

I decide to keep him talking. "Well, what do the shadows say?"

He shrugs his shoulders. He doesn't seem to care. But he presses on, "They are shadows. They are in my room, over there."

"Let's talk about something else."

"Okay."

"Instead of looking at shadows, what do you think God looks like?"

His eyes wander around, bemused. "I don't know!"

"Well, how about this: do you know what's really cool about God?"

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"What?"

"God is scary. I mean, like big time scary."

His eyes pop out of his head. "Oh," he whispers.

"Scary like an exploding volcano, or a thunderstorm with lots of lightening. God is like a giant rock that is rolling down the hill, or water that washes everything away."

It occurs to me that I'm going out on a limb, but maybe not too far. I am talking about the same Power that put the universe together, closed the mouths of hungry lions, flooded the earth, put a child into a virgin, and brought His own flesh back to life. Not a Being to be trifled with. Big power; uncontrollable power: that's "scary."

"You know what else?" I ask my son.

"What?" he is still whispering.

"God is big and scary, *and* God is your friend."

It takes longer, this time. "Oh." he is still whispering.

"He's bigger and meaner than the shadows."

"Oh!" Now he gets it, and smiles a little.

I am not sure what I've just done, but I figure that God meets us where we are. For me, God wears a number of faces. The Spirit walks beside me becoming perhaps a girlfriend, a lover, a champion; all I need, and more. Why would God do any less for a little boy at bedtime? It occurs to me that, as the youngest and smallest person in the house, my son would probably like a friend that could make all of his oppressors, either real and imagined, go away. This gives me an idea.

"There's not a shadow in your room," I say to my son, "that can stand up to God. Nothing can ever beat Him."

"Wooowwww."

"Uh-huh. And here's the best part: God thinks your cool, too. I bet God would show up right here for you, looking like anything. What would that be tonight? Some people say He's like a lion, you know."

"No. . . ." The boy scratches his chin, "He's a snapping turtle."

"A . . . snapping turtle?"

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"Yeah, an Alligator Snapping Turtle." His voice is certain. This is a brave new world, and I am my toddler's guest. It doesn't matter that he and I have just co-created the thing, he owns it now.

Well, whatever. I am walking in, with my eyes wide open. "Then, I guess it's time to talk to the Snapping Turtle.?"

"Sure," his whisper is reverent.

"Repeat after me, 'Dear God, the Alligator Snapping Turtle,'"

"Dear God, the Alligator Snapping Turtle,"

"You are so . . . ' what?"

"COOL!"

"All right, 'And you are so . . . ?'"

"Scary, and big, and with sharp claws!"

"Great, 'And thank You for being my friend?'"

"Yeah, thank You for being my friend!"

"Amen," we said together.

He closed his eyes, relaxing onto his pillow. I said, "How about the shadows now?"

"Neh," he says.

I stand up. My son looks happy enough. As I turn to leave, he says again, "Mom?"

"Yes, honey."

"God drives a PT Cruiser."

"An Alligator Snapping Turtle in a PT Cruiser?" I want to be sure.

"No. A *rainbow* PT Cruiser. That's what God drives, okay?"

I knew it!