

***TURBO
JETSLAMS***

Proof #29
of the
Non-Existence of God

Also by Jass Richards

(Rev and Dylan series)

License to Do That

The Blasphemy Tour

The Road Trip Dialogues

(Brett series)

Dogs Just Wanna Have Fun

This Will Not Look Good on My Resume

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of the
Non-Existence of God

Jass Richards

Magenta

Published by Magenta

The logo for Magenta, featuring the word "Magenta" in a stylized, handwritten-style font.

TurboJetslams: Proof #29 of the Non-Existence of God

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ISBN 978-1-926891-65-1

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Cover design by Jass Richards

Formatting and interior book design by Elizabeth Beeton

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I would like to acknowledge funding support from the Ontario Arts Council, an agency of the Government of Ontario.



ONTARIO ARTS COUNCIL
CONSEIL DES ARTS DE L'ONTARIO

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Library and Archives Canada Cataloguing in Publication

Richards, Jass, author

TurboJetslams : proof #29 of the non-existence of God / Jass Richards.

Issued in print and electronic formats.

ISBN 978-1-926891-65-1 (paperback).--ISBN 978-1-926891-66-8 (html).--

ISBN 978-1-926891-67-5 (pdf)

I. Title.

PS8635.I268T87 2016

C813'.6

C2015-904272-0

C2015-904273-9

This is a work of fiction.

But any resemblance to real persons,
living or deceased,
is completely justified.

All her life, she'd wanted to live in a cabin on a lake in a forest.

And do nothing but read, write, and think.

After ten years of crappy, part-time, occasional, relief, and temp jobs, two years of which were spent counting cars at busy intersections—what else does one do with degrees in Literature, Psychology, and Philosophy?—she managed to have \$10,000 in her savings account. Enough for a down payment. So she started calling real estate agents a little north of Toronto.

When she told them what she wanted and what she could afford, they laughed.

So she called real estate agents a bit further north. They still laughed, but not as loudly.

She kept calling, further and further north, until finally one agent, just this side of the Arctic circle, simply asked, “How soon do you need it?”

“No rush,” Vic replied. “I’ll just keep renting until I find the perfect spot.”

Several months and a few near-perfect spots later, the agent took her to a cabin for sale on Paradise Lake.

She started falling in love with the place on the drive in. They’d driven ten miles from the nearest town, five miles on dirt roads, the last two of which wound through trees on either side.

She continued to fall in love as they turned into the driveway. It was long. You couldn’t even see the cabin from the road.

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And as soon as she walked around to the lake side, she knew. It was perfect.

“Yes,” she said. “I’ll take it.”

The agent stared at her. “Don’t you want to see the inside?”

“Okay.” But it didn’t really matter. The washroom could have required some assembly. The floor could have been missing. She didn’t care. Because she couldn’t take her eyes off the view.

The lake was surrounded by hills, all heavily treed, all wildernessy.

The cabin was on the side of a small cove at the end of the lake. Crown land curved around the cove, extending into a peninsula across from the cabin. So she saw nothing but water and trees, lake and forest.

She felt like a violin that had finally found its bow.

There was a vacant lot on the right. Again, heavily treed and wildernessy.

“It belongs to the gentleman two cottages down,” the agent said. “I think he’s keeping it for his kids.”

“Well, if he ever wants to sell it, tell him I’ll buy it,” she told her. “In a heartbeat.”

As she stood there, unwilling, *unable* to move, looking out at the little cove, the water, the trees rising all around, it felt...right. Just—right.

After nineteen addresses in ten years, she was home.

The lake side of the lot was a bit steep, but it was certainly doable. Maybe when she was sixty and had no knees left, she’d

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have to put in stairs, ramps, or a pulley system, but for now, it was good. She simply made a little twisty path between the trees, saplings, weeds, and whatever.

There was no point in cutting, clearing, and planting grass. The slope she was on would probably erode away if she so much as touched it, and in any case, it would be impossible to mow. Not that she had a lawnmower. Or intended to get one.

So she left it all, front and back, as is. Better for the bugs that way. As she found out the following spring.

She spent the first two months, September and October, making it habitable. All of the bits in the washroom *were* assembled, and there *was* a floor, but...

She got rid of the cookstove that was in the middle of the living room slash kitchen and took out the counter that divided the space in two. She wanted room to dance.

Next, she replaced the huge fridge with a smaller one. Got rid of the oven and put in a doggy door. Put a mattress in the corner at the back. Took out the wall between the two small bedrooms. Almost took out the supporting beam. (She was having such fun with the sledgehammer.)

Good thing her new neighbours, an elderly couple living at the other end of the lane, happened to come by. (She discovered, much to her delight, that there were only three others living on the lake: in addition to the elderly Johnsons, there was MaryAnn, who lived across the lake and had two young boys, and the Campbells, who lived just past the Johnsons and were expecting their first child. There were also three houses

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on top of the hill coming in, all occupied by retirees. There were a few summer cottages, whose owners may have been up every now and then through the fall; their presence wasn't particularly noteworthy.)

She also took out the doors and closets of the two small bedrooms. Ex-bedrooms. Used the wood to build bookshelves onto three of the walls, put her desk against the fourth—the one with the large window, overlooking the lake—and had herself a study.

Then she cleaned the place. The soot on the walls was so thick from the cookstove that she had to change the water in her pail every five minutes. She washed, rinsed, washed, and rinsed *everything*.

She spent the next two months, November and December, understanding what the word 'winterized' meant. Or, rather, what it didn't mean.

And then she spent the next fifteen years making her cabin on a lake in a forest even better. She had a trench dug for the water line to the lake, but even so, had to dive into ice cold water three springs in a row to fix the foot valve, having been without running water for half the winter: one January, the valve sunk to the bottom and got stuck in the muck; the next year, it rose to the top and froze into the ice; the third year—she couldn't remember what happened to it the third year. She did remember that when she was ten feet under and taking too long, she

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reached such a oneness with the world, she was convinced she could breathe water. After all, it had oxygen in it, right? H_2O .

It would take another ten years before she was able to afford a well, but she hadn't drowned in the interim, so that was okay. In the meantime, there was a delightful spring on the adjacent crown land, and it was all very Henry David Thoreau to haul water. For the first two weeks.

She tarred the leaking shingled roof every few months, apparently never tarring the actual holes, until she could afford a metal roof.

She replaced the windows one at a time, as she could afford them, with glazed double-paned sliders. And eventually folded up for good the plastic she'd been putting over them every winter.

She had huge eight-by-eight picture windows put in the main room on either side of the fireplace. Going with all-glass, no crossbars or divisions for inserted screened windows at the top or bottom, turned out to be a bit of a ventilation mistake, but oh, the view! She put her couch—once she discovered laptops, she started writing not while seated at her desk but while sunk into the couch (which had been given to her by one of her piano students, probably only because that was easier than carting it to the dump—it had a broken spring, hence the 'sunk')—in front of one of the large windows, angling it just so, to see the sun sparkle on the water through the gaps among the trees...

Speaking of the fireplace, she discovered that despite the implicit presence of fire, a fireplace is not a source of heat. If you just stand in front of it, your hands might get warm. Provided

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you shove them into the flames. But otherwise? And since she'd cleverly had the baseboard heater removed—it ruined the aesthetics, being under just one of the glorious pair of picture windows—she was very cold the first winter. She bought a woodstove for the second winter. A Canadian Tire special. It was all she could afford. But three years later, she got a high-quality Regency fireplace insert. Much neater than the woodstove jutting out in the way of her dancing. But then, since she couldn't see the pretty flames from her couch in the evenings, she replaced it the following year with an Osborne insert, the one with the bay window door. Eventually, since heat doesn't travel sideways, she bought a furnace. And so, after fifteen years, she was finally *warm*.

She replaced the Picasso-wannabe dock with a dockraft: an eight by eight raft that doubled as a dock. It had one end anchored solidly on shore, the other end floating on barrels, which meant she didn't have to haul it out every winter—not that she could have done that, given the vertical—because it could just rise and fall with the ice, instead of getting yanked apart by it.

Blackflies swarm, she discovered, and they crawl on your arms, and on your legs, and along your hair line, and in your ears, and your eyes, and your nose— And they bite. Blackflies are near-microscopic piranhas with wings. This—this swarming and crawling and biting—goes on for a good six weeks. In mid-April, if it was warm enough, she could finally go outside after the long winter, but a mere four weeks later, in mid-May, the blackflies drove her back in. Between the blackflies and the mosquitos (and the deer flies and the horse flies), once she swatted at herself so hard, she knocked herself out. So once

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blackfly season ended, and she'd recovered consciousness, she built a screened-in gazebo. (No frickin' way she was going to build it *during* blackfly season.)

(She also discovered, by the way, how impossible it is to get a roof on if you make it first, on the ground. Even if you have your elderly neighbours to help.)

Alas, the gazebo didn't keep the bugs out, and for the life of her she couldn't figure out why. So a few years later, she had a screened porch added to the cabin. When the guy moved the gazebo, because it was exactly where the porch was going to go, he ended up setting it in a slightly depressed area behind the cabin, and she could see, clear as the daylight coming through, a space all along the top. She bought a caulking gun and went crazy. Good to have a back-up.

Once the screened-in porch was done, she was delighted to discover that when she was in it, she could hear the spring gurgling up. So she carefully arranged the rocks just so, for the falling water to make the prettiest tinkly sound.

(One of the summer people used the spring for water and always tossed aside her carefully arranged rocks—did he think nature had arranged them just so? She finally asked him if he could just *set* them aside, sensing that it would be going too far to ask him to please just put them back the way he found them. Why? he asked belligerently. She told him. Politely. He looked at her like she was kidding, no doubt unable to take a woman seriously. And kept tossing the rocks into the bush.)

She also had the cabin extended a bit, while she was at it, so she could move her bed to the lake side. She had a window

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put in right above it so at night, she could hear the beautiful calls of the loons.

She replaced the narrow lakeside porch—one day she stepped out the door and it just sort of swooned to the left and settled onto the ground with a sigh—with a sturdy deck, large enough for a lounge chair, a tree trunk table on the left for her work, and another on the right for her tea.

And, finally, she took advantage of a government program that would subsidize adding more insulation to her cabin (all it had was eight inches of that pink stuff) (which had, in the crawlspace, fallen down, and she spent a day in hell, strapping it back up so the floor would be warmish). She'd postponed the extra insulation for so long because she thought it had to be added from the inside. Adding it to the outside, to the cabin as it was, just meant adding another layer of siding—instead of dismantling three walls of books in the study and another wall of LPs and CDs in the main space, as well as the kitchen sink, counter, and cupboards.)

Much of this she did by herself. All the while staring at the lake. (Which may account for the numerous injuries she sustained.) (Though the lack of tools, skill, and knowledge may also have played a role.) She couldn't take her eyes off of it. The lake. She still couldn't fifteen years later. Still, fifteen years later, whenever she walked through her cabin, she looked out the large window at her desk, out the sliding glass doors, out the two large windows in the main space—to the water, to the trees, to the nothing but lake and forest.

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She found employment, barely, taking whatever she could get, determined to do whatever she had to, to keep her little cabin. She did some freelance editing, some relief work at a women's shelter, some supply teaching. She deejayed for weddings. Scrubbed toilets for minimum wage.

And spent her free time, such as it was, down at the water, on her dockraft, sitting in an old lounge chair, reading, writing, and thinking, Shiggles lying beside her in the sun or underneath her in the shade.

She and Shiggles would watch the ducks come in for a landing, and the heron, who would regularly come to their end of the lake to fish. There was an otter, who wintered one year under her kayak. And of course the loons. In spring, she'd see them, baby on board. And she'd hear them. Oh, the sound. It was absolutely breath-taking.

Sometimes the water was placid beyond belief, and sometimes it was corrugated by the wind. So sometimes the lake would sparkle in the sun, and sometimes it would glitter. She loved the clarity of sparkles when they were distinct and close, but she also loved the distant multitude of them.

And every day between five and six o'clock, when the sun descended to just the right point, its beams at just the right angle, it would light up the trees like a spotlight, then leave them in shadow as it moved in a slow pan from left to right. In spring when the leaves were new, the cove would be transformed into

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a shimmering chartreuse emerald.

Then for a few minutes, it would stream through the trees, like through cathedral windows, and then a few minutes after that, it would light just the outer tips of the branches, frosting on a cake.

And then it would be dusk.

Often she would sit down on the dockraft at night, listening for the loons and watching the moonlight on the dark water. It had such a different quality from the sunlight, it was a silver gleaming mercury.

The lake was small, a little over a kilometer in length, four hundred meters across at its widest. It took less than an hour to kayak the perimeter, but there was a little creek feeding it, which was delightfully kayakable up to the shallow spot at which point you could just turn around or get out and pull your kayak across the rocks and rapids for a hundred meters and then carry on. And at the end of the lake, which was actually just the swollen end of a river, you could keep going, up the river, for about five miles to the other end where it opened up again into another lake. This is what they did, she and Shiggles. Almost every day. They'd see not just the forementioned ducks, herons, otter, and loons, but also muskrat and the occasional mink. And, as occasionally, deer, moose, and bear, on shore or swimming across.

Sometimes there was just enough wind on the water to make trillions of teeny bubbles that caught the light and swirled amid the showier sparkles, and if she timed it right, in

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terms of her direction in relation to the sun, it was like paddling into the Milky Way.

She couldn't see the sun set from her cabin, so she often kayaked back late. If she paddled backwards, she could watch it, sometimes gorgeous orange and red. And then she'd turn around and paddle home in the moonlight, in the starlight, the beavers circling, strong and stealthy, then suddenly swishing and slapping. And the loons calling...

Up the hill about five hundred meters from her cabin, there was an old logging road which led into the forest. They walked and ran for miles. It was amazing. The road, such as it was, crossed over a little babbling brook and then passed a couple small lakes. Several trails split off, going to other small lakes. Her elderly neighbours urged her to buy some pepper spray in case she met a bear, but she didn't think she needed it. She trusted the wildlife to be reasonable. She found a magical spot about five miles in, full of maple trees. In the spring, it was a luminescence of lime and tennis ball green. In the fall, it was a palace of scarlet, gold, and tangerine.

After twelve years of whatever work she could get, she got lucky and landed a few courses at the university an hour away. She continued to live at poverty level, putting the rest of her income toward the mortgage, and three years later had paid it off.

Just in time, because she lost the courses. (She didn't realize that student expectations had risen; they now expected an A merely for showing up.) But by then, high speed internet

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was finally available at Paradise Lake, and she discovered the wonderful world of online teaching. With no mortgage to pay, her living expenses were cut in half, and given the per course pay of online teaching, she could support herself with just ten hours a week. Sweet.

So she thought she'd write a book. To that point, she'd been writing short pieces—poetry, prose, op-eds, articles. But now, she thought, a book. Yes. Something to do with applied ethics. Maybe a primer for adults. Two of the courses she'd taught at the university were Business Ethics and Contemporary Moral Issues, and it was clear (*quite* clear) that the students thought they already knew right from wrong. After all, it's something we're taught as children.

But most people, she'd observed, hadn't updated their childhood. So ethically speaking, most people remained unsophisticated. Ethically-arrested. Morally-challenged. 'Don't kill', and for the women, the somewhat higher standard, 'Be nice', are woefully inadequate. And 'Do what your parents tell you' is fine until you realize that your parents don't have a clue most of the time. Yes, she thought, I'll write a book about doing the right thing.

No job to go to meant she didn't have to set her alarm. So she just got up when she woke up, and was down at the water by ten, which was when the sun crested the trees and set the cove a-sparkle. She worked—reading, writing, and thinking—for a couple hours, staring at the water, and when she was ready for a break, she and Shiggles went for a long walk in the forest, solutions to the problems, gaps, and rough spots of the morning's work presenting themselves at miles two, three, four.

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When they got back, she'd write again, articulating and polishing those solutions, gaps, and rough spots. Then, unless it was one of her two teaching days, they'd go out onto the lake in her kayak until dark.

She spent a week like that. A whole week. The first week, she thought with such deep satisfaction, as she sat in her chair watching the wind blow a patch of sparkles across the water, thinking that the last twenty-five years had been hard, very hard, but worth it—to have gotten her to where she was now, sitting down at the water at her cabin on a lake in a forest, able to do almost nothing but read, write, and think— The first week, she thought, of the rest of my life...

And then one of those TurboJetslams* screamed into the cove.

When it became clear that it wasn't leaving until it had churned and cross-churned every square inch of water, like a dog lifting its leg at every single tree, and she had run out of new and creative ways to express herself, despite the impossibility of being heard above what was unquestionably the most annoying sound on the planet, she packed up her books and her writing pad, and, trying not to breathe, a headache from the fumes already forming, headed back up to her cabin.

And she knew right then and there that Sartre was right.

Absolutely, unequivocally right.

* Using any one of the more familiar terms would attract a lawsuit, and 'personal watercraft' sounds just so...inoffensive.

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Turned out it was the visiting nephew of the guy who owned one of the cottages across the lake. She sighed with relief. It was a temporary thing then.

The week after the nephew, and the TurboJetslam left, she started hearing another noise. Distant banging and clanging and mechanical groaning and shrieking... She went to investigate.

And found Tim or Lyle, one of MaryAnn's two boys, now both in their mid-twenties, doing some work on their road. What she was hearing was the backhoe Tim or Lyle was on, which she assumed they'd rented for a day.

Or, since whatever they were doing to the road took all day and then some, had rented for a week.

Or two. Because next, they landscaped the entrance, putting huge boulders on either side.

Or three. They rearranged the boulders.

Or four. They widened the trail that led off their driveway up into the hills. Making the dirt bike trail wide enough for ATVs maybe.

Or five. They knocked down the boulders and dragged them half way up the trail.