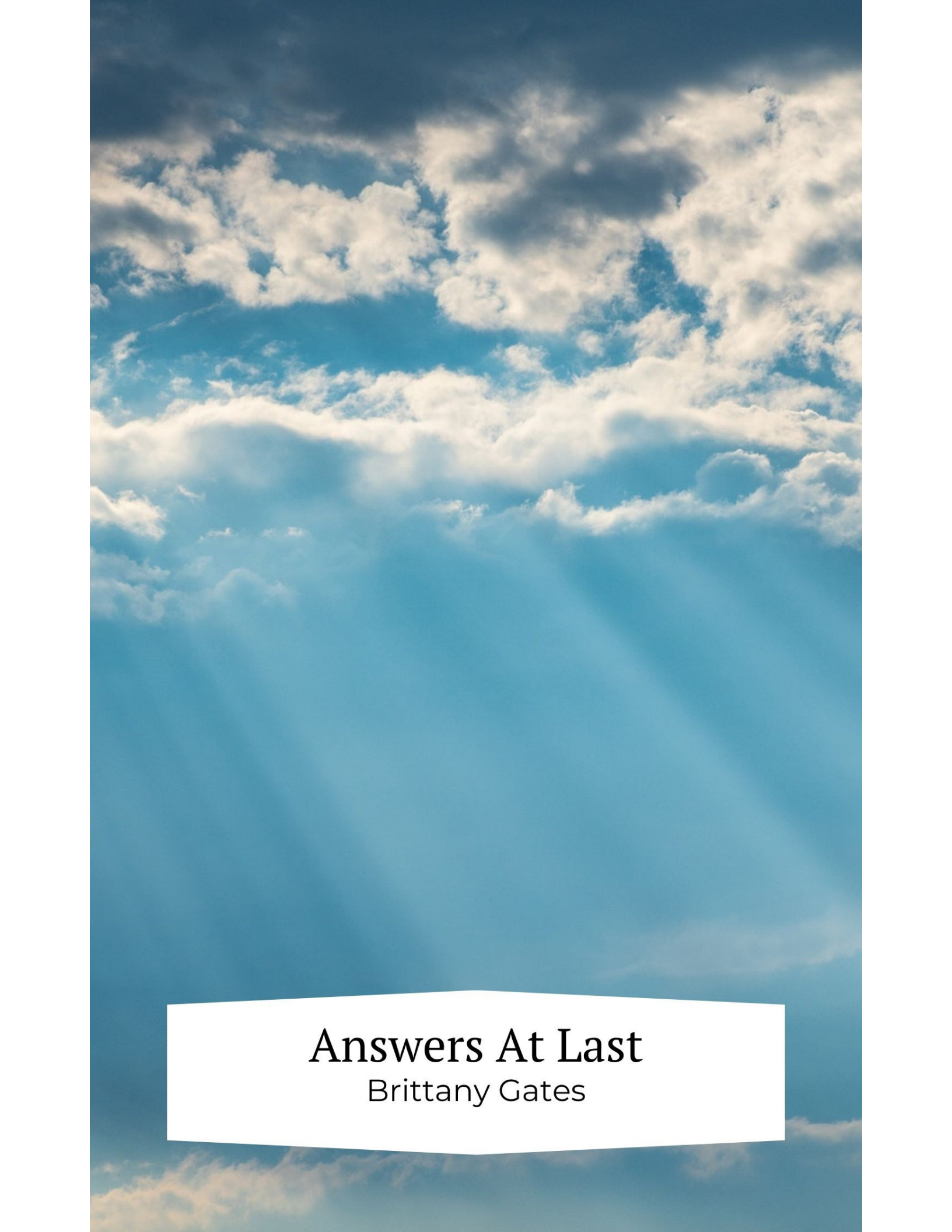




Answers At Last

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"I want to talk to God now!"

"I told you before that you have to wait your turn just as everyone else is doing."

"I will not! I've waited a long time for this moment: To talk to God face-to-face. I want to give him a piece of my mind. Now!"

The other people waiting in line near the commotion look at their neighbors, exchanging raised eyebrows and pursed lips. One person shakes their head while another stares at their feet.

"Please get back in line and –"

The speaker stops talking when a hand lands on their left shoulder, causing the speaker to turn around and look.

"Father! What are you doing here?"

"The argument brought me here."

"I'm sorry, Father. I tried to explain that –"

"Peter, do not worry. It is not your fault. Come, my child. I will speak with you now."

The angry individual stares at God with wide eyes and a gaping mouth, just like the others waiting in line.

"You're God," the angry individual finally asks after regaining their composure.

"I am."

"You look like a human."

"Of course. I made humans in my likeness. What did you expect me to look like?"

"I don't know. Maybe a glowing figure? Or very tall?"

God smiles broadly. "I get similar comments every time one of my children views me for the first time. Now follow me and we will talk."

The angry individual follows God away from the line of people. Soon, vastness surround them: A rich color of sky blue with tinges of sun yellow.

"My child, you told Peter you would like to give me a piece of your mind. I have been waiting for this conversation. Go ahead and tell me exactly what you want to say."

"You already know what I want to say. You are a powerful, all-knowing God."

God nods, placing his hands behind his back, clasping the fingers together.

"Even though you know exactly what I'm going to say I will tell you anyhow: How come you – a powerful, all-knowing God – stay here in Heaven and allow us on Earth, your creations, become such a mess? No, it's worse than a mess because one can clean up a mess. No, the situation is a disaster. Humans kill each other for no reason sometimes. Other times they hurt each other. Life is so painful for so many, and yet you do nothing as you stay in Heaven. You, a powerful, all-knowing God. You could solve all the Earth's problems and save humanity from pain and suffering but you won't. Your believers say God loves us but that is a lie. You're not a loving God. If you were you would have saved us long ago."

"My child, you are correct about the status of the world my creations live in. However, you do not care about the pain your fellow man or woman experiences. You only care about the pain and suffering you experienced."

"You're wrong!"

"My child, do not lie to me. I know what is in your heart."

"Fine. You're right. All the people who get hurt or die by someone else, I don't know them nor do I want to. I'm too focused on the bad stuff that happened to me."

"Do you blame me for what happened to you?"

"Yes," the angry individual says with narrowed eyes and low voice. "You know exactly what happened to me. Why I'm so angry even now. And you did nothing to stop it from happening. When I pleaded for your help you did nothing. The powerful, all-knowing God tells us to ask and you shall receive. But when we do we receive no answer. You're a liar."

"I heard your pleas, my child."

"So why didn't you save me?"

"You will not like my answer."

"Just tell me why!"

"You had to experience suffering to learn about the meaning of life. Do you remember praying to me about that? Asking me to tell you the meaning of life. And I did through the great pain you suffered."

"Was there no other way for me to learn?"

"There was not, my child. You, like the others before you, had to go through turmoil to understand life fully."

The angry individual's mouth drops open again. The eyes search around the vastness as the mind processes the realization.

"I hate you."

God unclasps his hands and brings them to the front of his body, resting them on his thighs.

"You are not the first to say that to me."

"I am the first to actually mean it."

"You are not the first to do that either. Relax here, my child, and calm yourself."

"I'm not finished talking with you."

"I think you should take a break from this conversation. I will come back later and we can speak again once you are calm."

"I won't let you run away, not after I waited so long."

"Be wary of your tongue. It will lead you into damnation."

"I rather be damned than be around you. I rather be damned than listen to your excuses. I rather be damned than spend eternity here!"

The angry individual vanishes from the vastness, leaving God by himself, shaking his head slowly.