



Dr. King's Refrigerator: And Other Bedtime Stories

By Charles Johnson

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Winner of the National Book Award

“A novel in the honorable tradition of Billy Budd and Moby Dick...heroic in proportion... fiction that hooks into the mind.” — *The New York Times Book Review*

“Long after we’d stopped believing in the great American novel, along comes a spellbinding adventure story that may be just that.” — *Chicago Tribune*

“It’s a joy to read fiction in which there is a cultivated vision at work...the greatest victory of *Dreamer* is the light it shines on the life of Martin Luther King Jr.”

—Dennis McFarland, *The New York Times Book Review*

“In their remarkable simplicity these stories reach into...the African American experience with surprising freshness and the fluency of years of gathered wisdom. This book is a deeply satisfying reading adventure.” — *Black Issues Book Review*

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Dr. King's Refrigerator: And Other Bedtime Stories By Charles Johnson Bibliography

- Sales Rank: #320196 in Books
- Brand: Brand: Scribner
- Published on: 2005-02-08
- Released on: 2005-02-08
- Original language: English
- Number of items: 1
- Dimensions: 8.44" h x .63" w x 5.50" l, .60 pounds
- Binding: Hardcover
- 144 pages



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Editorial Review

From Publishers Weekly

Sages squabble, philosophers deliberate and kings dream in this collection of eight short stories by National Book Award–winner Johnson (*Middle Passage*, etc.). Like fairy tales for policy-minded grownups, the stories revolve around ethical and philosophical decision making. In "Executive Decisions," the head of a Seattle company ponders which of two candidates to hire for an important post. The easy favorite is a white woman, capable and personable; the other contender is a tense, watchful black man, who knows "firsthand and through research... the contributions from people of color." In the end, the narrator's decision hinges on a revelation about the role of a black woman in his own white father's past. Though wooden in conception (like many of these stories), the tale comes to life at its ambiguous ending. Johnson's longer, more carefully fleshed out stories are most effective. In "The Gift of the Osuo," the king of a 17th-century African tribe is given a magic chalk that allows him to draw anything and make it come to life. The things he draws resemble "not the Real, but the Real transfigured," and it's the magic of this vision that transforms an otherwise ordinary fable. The didactic flatness of most of the other entries—including the title story, in which Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. finds inspiration in lettuce and grapefruit—isn't quite obscured by occasional bursts of inventive language and insight.

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From [Bookmarks Magazine](#)

Critics have decidedly mixed reviews for Johnson's third short story collection. Johnson, who teaches at the University of Washington and was awarded a MacArthur "genius" grant, wrote most of these stories for the Washington Commission for the Humanities. The majority read like fiction exercises; most critics praise them only as simple "bedtime stories" with little underlying depth. The few challenging entries—most notably "Kwoon" and "The Gift of the Osuo"—are much more successful (and have been previously anthologized). Unlike the clever set-ups and quick pay-offs of the shortest stories here, these two tales demonstrate the author's considerable—if sometimes hidden—talent.

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From [Booklist](#)

Johnson's collection of short stories highlight his storytelling abilities as well as his powerful grasp of the historical and political significance of the small details of race and identity. He includes a Kafkaesque tale of a man audited for untaxed dreams in a society that keeps track of dreams—day and night. In another story, a young woman falls in love with the son of the president of an African nation and pays a high price when she can't resist defying their cultural imperative against kissing. Johnson spans time and geography as he imagines the final days of Descartes, as told by his valet, as the philosopher is engaged to teach philosophy to Queen Christina of Sweden in 1649 and also offers a tale set in the present day about a martial-arts instructor on Chicago's South Side. The title story features Martin Luther King Jr. on the eve of the Montgomery bus boycott, which will plunge him onto the center stage of the civil rights movement, as he struggles with a sermon and is inspired by the contents of his kitchen. *Vanessa Bush*

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Users Review

From reader reviews:

Allan Nguyen:

Now a day people who Living in the era exactly where everything reachable by connect to the internet and the resources within it can be true or not involve people to be aware of each details they get. How a lot more to be smart in receiving any information nowadays? Of course the reply is reading a book. Reading a book can help individuals out of this uncertainty Information specially this Dr. King's Refrigerator: And Other Bedtime Stories book because book offers you rich details and knowledge. Of course the knowledge in this book hundred per-cent guarantees there is no doubt in it everybody knows.

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Lauren Allison:

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