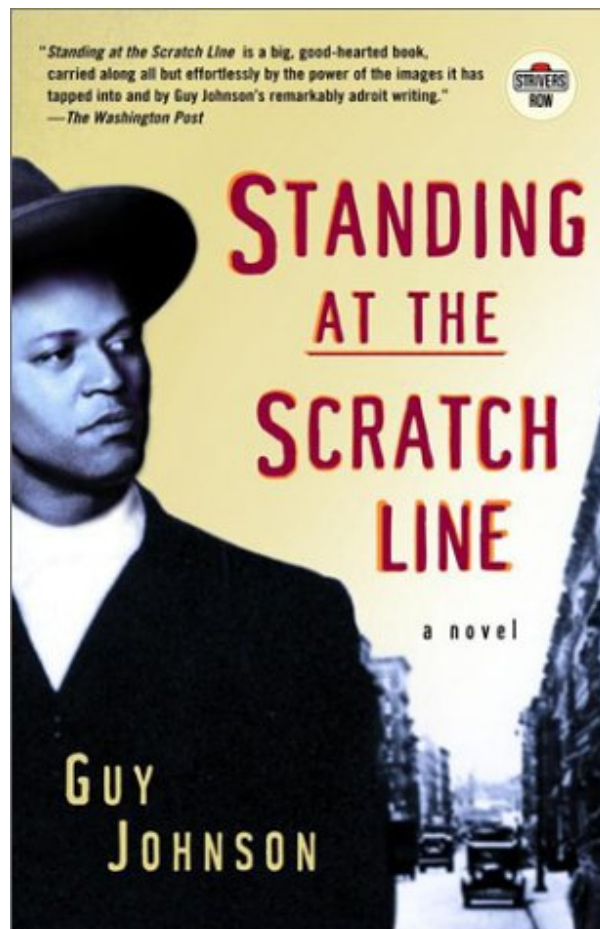


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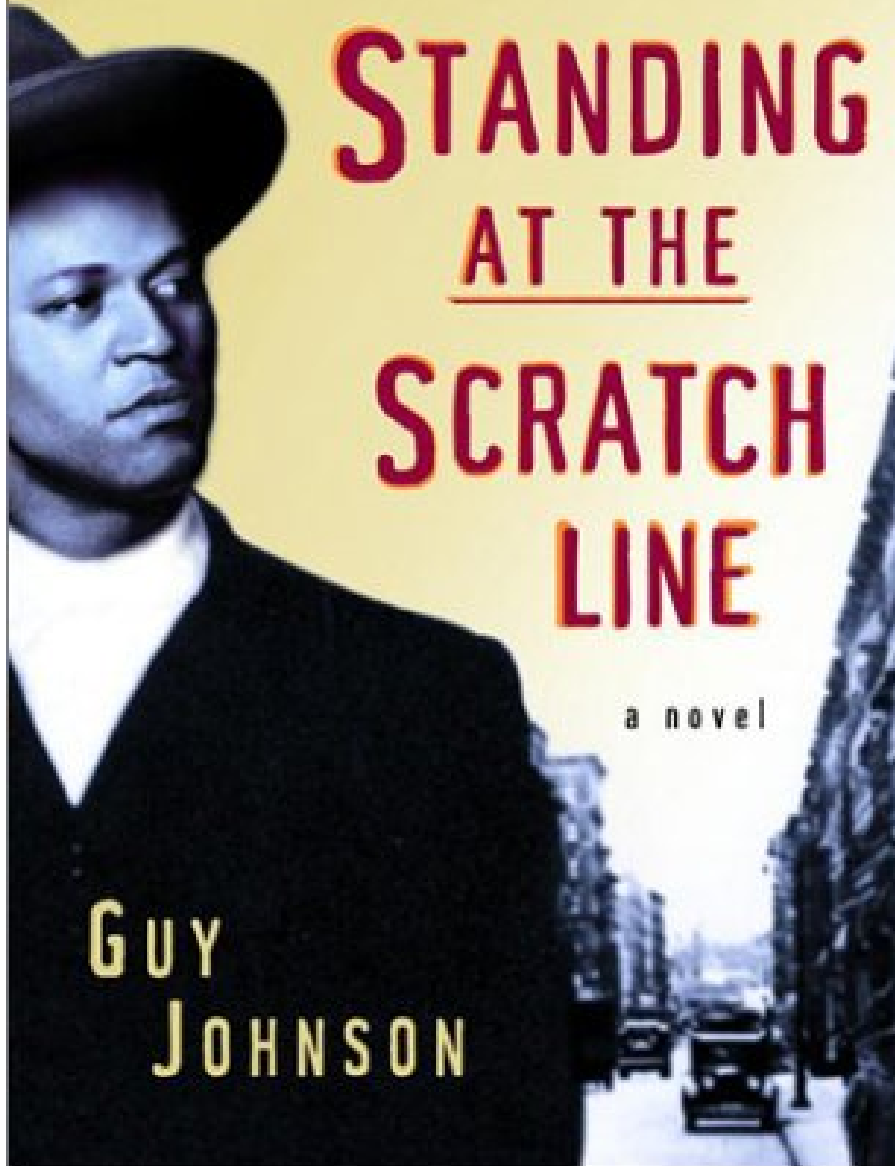
"*Standing at the Scratch Line* is a big, good-hearted book, carried along all but effortlessly by the power of the images it has tapped into and by Guy Johnson's remarkably adroit writing."
—*The Washington Post*



STANDING AT THE SCRATCH LINE

a novel

GUY
JOHNSON



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Amazon.com Review

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In the course of tracking King's life, *Standing at the Scratch Line* crosses cities and decades--from New York to New Orleans to Oakland, from the teens to the '40s. King becomes a wealthy man, largely thanks to the opportunities presented by Prohibition. Handsome and strapping, he easily wins the heart of a Louisiana farm girl, Serena, who becomes his wife. Unfortunately, their love doesn't last long--even though the marriage does--because of tragedies involving their sons, for which he blames his wife. In *King*, Guy Johnson offers a character who responds aggressively to his time and place in history. He is a man of menacing proportions, with a justice system all his own. --Katherine Alberg

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Raised in the steamy bayous of New Orleans in the early 1900s, LeRoi "King" Tremain, caught up in his family's ongoing feud with the rival DuMont family, learns to fight. But when the teenage King mistakenly kills two white deputies during a botched raid on the DuMonts, the Tremains' fear of reprisal forces King to flee Louisiana.

King thus embarks on an adventure that first takes him to France, where he fights in World War I as a member of the segregated 369th Battalion—in the bigoted army he finds himself locked in combat with American soldiers as well as with Germans. When he returns to America, he battles the Mob in Jazz Age Harlem, the KKK in Louisiana, and crooked politicians trying to destroy a black township in Oklahoma.

King Tremain is driven by two principal forces: He wants to be treated with respect, and he wants to create a family dynasty much like the one he left behind in Louisiana. This is a stunning debut by novelist Guy Johnson that provides a true depiction of the lives of African-Americans in the early decades of the twentieth century.

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Not Bad But a Bit Unrealistic

By Pamela B.

I thought the story had too many story lines which made it a bit more unrealistic than it needed to be. The main character, King, went to too many places and did too many things which blurred the line between this being a good piece of realistic, somewhat historical fiction, versus this having elements of a tall tale. However, I was engaged for the vast majority of the book. I lost some interest with the book towards the end but was interested to see how it was going to end.

I thought the character of Serena took some interesting turns but thought the author could have better developed her character- front start to end. There was something uneven (perhaps overdeveloped or maybe underdeveloped) about her character that didn't sit right with me. It seemed the core of her character constantly changed which made her a bit disjointed as a character when you look at her from beginning to end. In other words, I did not see a clear thread in the core of her character. This made me question the author's craft.

As I concluded the last part of the book, I kept asking myself where is Sampson. Unless I missed something, this character just disappears. What happened to Sampson???

Nevertheless, I did enjoy the book and look forward to discussing it with my book club.

0 of 0 people found the following review helpful.

Beautiful tale of struggle, honor and determination

By theron ngaqui

This story grabs hold of you from the first page. The action is unrelenting and beautifully articulated. Johnson weaves a narrative that blends poetic alliteration with the struggle of black identity and black love. His story is well rounded. It takes readers across oceans to the savagery of war and through the gauntlets of post slavery America while keeping true to the importance of family and honor. I recommend this book to anyone looking for a story that isn't often told and one that will have you thirsty for more.

0 of 0 people found the following review helpful.

Interesting and entertaining

By KAT

I read this on my son's recommendation. It was good, though a lot of the events were a little far fetched. I was disappointed in some inaccuracies when describing New Orleans. For one thing, we don't have hills. Everything is flat. Also, there is no Ramparts Street - it's Rampart. And New Orleans Creoles do not think they are white. Other than that, it was pretty good, and I'll buy the second book just out of curiosity to see how some cliffhangers play out.

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