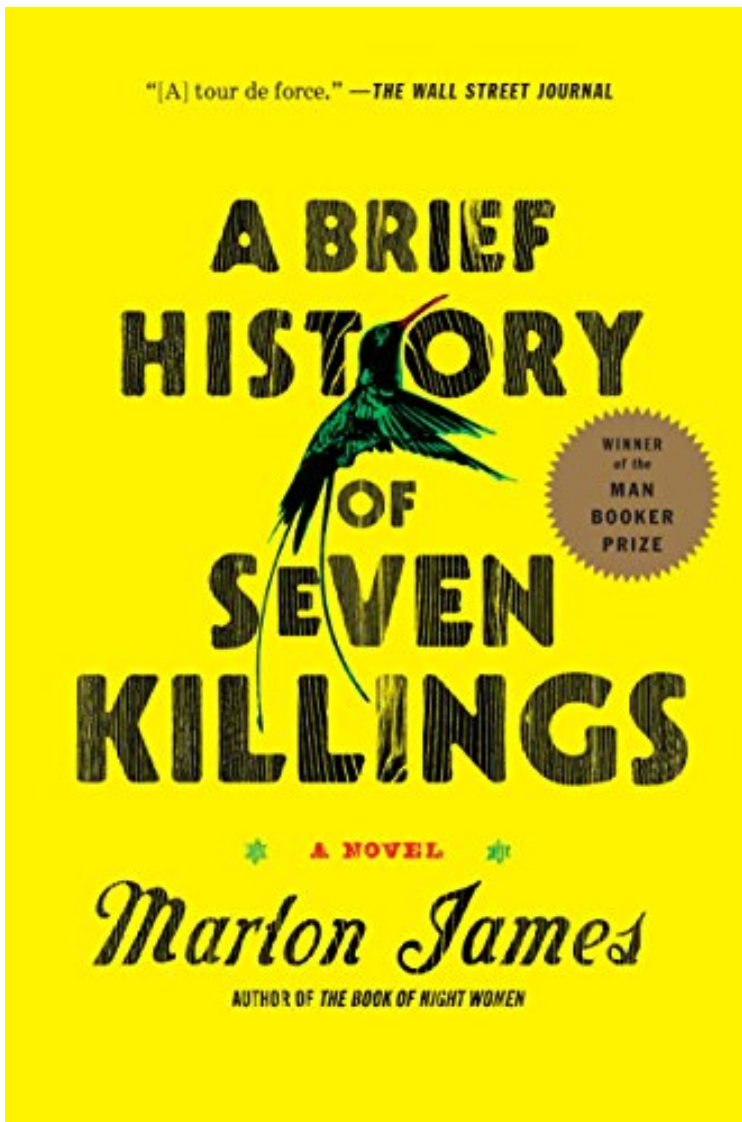


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# A Brief History of Seven Killings: A Novel



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## Description :

Prsentation de l'diteurWinner of the 2015 Man Booker PrizeA recipient of the 2015 American Book AwardOne of the Top 10 Books of 2014 Michiko Kakutani, The New York Times A New York Times Book Notable Book Named a best book of the year by: The New York Times Chicago Tribune The Washington Post The Boston Globe Time Newsweek The Huffington Post The Seattle Times The Houston Chronicle Publishers Weekly Library Journal Popsugar BookPage BuzzFeed Books Salon Kansas City Star L Magazine From the acclaimed author of The Book of Night Women comes a musical, electric, fantastically profane (The New York Times) epic that explores the tumultuous world of Jamaica over the past three decades. In A Brief History of Seven Killings, Marlon James combines brilliant storytelling with his unrivaled skills of characterization and meticulous eye for detail to forge an enthralling novel of dazzling

ambition and scope. On December 3, 1976, just before the Jamaican general election and two days before Bob Marley was to play the Smile Jamaica Concert to ease political tensions in Kingston, seven gunmen stormed the singers house, machine guns blazing. The attack wounded Marley, his wife, and his manager, and injured several others. Little was officially released about the gunmen, but much has been whispered, gossiped and sung about in the streets of West Kingston. Rumors abound regarding the assassins fates, and there are suspicions that the attack was politically motivated. A Brief History of Seven Killings delves deep into that dangerous and unstable time in Jamaicas history and beyond. James deftly chronicles the lives of a host of unforgettable characters gunmen, drug dealers, one-night stands, CIA agents, even ghosts over the course of thirty years as they roam the streets of 1970s Kingston, dominate the crack houses of 1980s New York, and ultimately reemerge into the radically altered Jamaica of the 1990s. Along the way, they learn that evil does indeed cast long shadows, that justice and retribution are inextricably linked, and that no one can truly escape his fate. Gripping and inventive, shocking and irresistible, A Brief History of Seven Killings is a mesmerizing modern classic of power, mystery, and insight. From the Hardcover edition. Extrait Listen. Dead people never stop talking. Maybe because death is not death at all, just a detention after school. You know where youre coming from and youre always returning from it. You know where youre going though you never seem to get there and youre just dead. Dead. It sounds final but its a word missing an ing. You come across men longer dead than you, walking all the time though heading nowhere and you listen to them howl and hiss because were all spirits or we think we are all spirits but were all just dead. Spirits that slip inside other spirits. Sometimes a woman slips inside a man and wails like the memory of making love. They moan and keen loud but it comes through the window like a whistle or a whisper under the bed, and little children think theres a monster. The dead love lying under the living for three reasons. (1) Were lying most of the time. (2) Under the bed looks like the top of a coffin, but (3) There is weight, human weight on top that you can slip into and make heavier, and you listen to the heart beat while you watch it pump and hear the nostrils hiss when their lungs press air and envy even the shortest breath. I have no memory of coffins. But the dead never stop talking and sometimes the living hear. This is what I wanted to say. When youre dead speech is nothing but tangents and detours and theres nothing to do but stray and wander awhile. Well, thats at least what the others do. My point being that the expired learn from the expired, but thats tricky. I could listen to myself, still claiming to anybody that would hear that I didnt fall, I was pushed over the balcony at the Sunset Beach Hotel in Montego Bay. And I cant say shut your trap, Artie Jennings, because every morning I wake up having to put my pumpkin-smashed head back together. And even as I talk now I can hear how I sounded then, can you dig it, dingedoodies? meaning that the afterlife is just not a happening scene, not a groovy shindig, Daddy-O, see those cool cats on the mat? They could never dig it, and theres nothing to do but wait for the man that killed me, but he wont die, he only gets older and older and trades out wives for younger and younger and breeding a whole brood of slow-witted boys and running the country down into the ground. Dead people never stop talking and sometimes the living hear. Sometimes he talks back if I catch him right as his eyes start to flicker in his sleep, talks until his wife slaps him. But Id rather listen to the longer dead. I see men in split breeches and bloody longcoats and they talk, but blood comes out of their mouths and good heavens that slave rebellion was such ghastly business and that queen has of course been of bloody awful use ever since the West India Company began their rather shoddy decline compared to the East and why are there so many negroes taking to sleeping so unsoundly wherever they see fit and confound it all I seem to have misplaced the left half of my face. To be dead is to understand that dead is not gone, youre in the flatness of the deadlands. Time doesnt stop. You watch it move but you are still, like a painting with a Mona Lisa smile. In this space a three-hundred-year-old slit throat and two-minute-old crib death is the same. If you dont watch how you sleep, youll find yourself the way the living found you. Me, Im lying on the floor, my head a smashed pumpkin with my right leg twisted behind the back and my two arms bent in a way that arms arent supposed to bend and from high up, from the balcony I look like a dead spider. I am up there and down here and from up there I see myself the way my killer saw me. The dead relive a motion, an action, a scream and theyre there again just like that, the train that never stopped running until it ran off the rails, the ledge from that building sixteen floors up, the car trunk that ran out of air. Rudeboys bodies bursting like pricked balloons, fifty-six bullets. Nobody falls that way without being pushed. I know. And I know how it feels and looks, a body that falls fighting air all the way down, grabbing on to clumps of nothing and begging once, just once, just goddamn once, Jesus, you sniveling son of a mongrel bitch, just once that air gives a grip. And you land in a ditch five feet deep or a marble-tiled floor sixteen feet down, still fighting when the floor rises up and smashes into you because it got tired of waiting for blood. And

were still dead but we wake up, me a crushed spider, him a burned cockroach. I have no memory of coffins. Listen. Living people wait and see because they fool themselves that they have time. Dead people see and wait. I once asked my Sunday school teacher, if heaven is the place of eternal life, and hell is the opposite of heaven, what does that make hell? A place for dirty little red boys like you, she said. Shes still alive. I see her, at the Eventide Old Folks Home getting too old and too stupid, not knowing her name and talking in so soft a rasp that nobody can hear that shes scared of nightfall because thats when the rats come for her good toes. I see more than that. Look hard enough or maybe just to the left and you see a country that was the same as I left it. It never changes, whenever Im around people they are exactly as I had left them, aging making no difference. The man who was father of a nation, father to me more than my own, cried like a sudden widow when he heard I had died. You never know when peoples dreams are connected to you before youre gone and then theres nothing to do, but watch them die in a different way, slow, limb by limb, system by system. Heart condition, diabetes, slow-killing diseases with slow-sounding names. This is the body going over to death with impatience, one part at a time. He will live to see them make him a national hero and he will die the only person thinking he had failed. Thats what happens when you personify hopes and dreams in one person. He becomes nothing more than a literary device. This is a story of several killings, of boys who meant nothing to a world still spinning, but each of them as they pass me carry the sweet-stink scent of the man that killed me. The first, he screams his tonsils out but the scream stops right at the gate of his teeth because they have gagged him and it tastes like vomit and stone. And someone has tied his hands tight behind his back but they feel loose because all the skin has rubbed off and blood is greasing the rope. Hes kicking with both legs because right is tied to left, kicking the dirt rising five feet, then six, and he cannot stand because its raining mud and dirt and dust to dust and rocks. One rock claps his nose and another bullets his eye and its erupting and hes screaming but the scream runs right to the tip of his mouth then back down like reflux and the dirt is a flood thats rising and rising and he cannot see his toes. Then hell wake up and hes still dead and he wont tell me his name. Bam-Bam I know I was fourteen. That me know. I also know that too many people talk too much, especially the American, who never shut up, just switch to a laugh every time he talk bout you, and it sound strange how he put your name beside people we never hear bout, Allende Lumumba, a name that sound like a country that Kunta Kinte come from. The American, most of the time hide him eye with sunglasses like he is a preacher from America come to talk to black people. Him and the Cuban come sometimes together, sometimes on they own, and when one talk the other always quiet. The Cuban dont fuck with guns because guns always need to be needed, him say. And I know me used to sleep on a cot and I know that my mother was a whore and my father was the last good man in the ghetto. And I know we watched your big house on Hope Road for days now, and at one point you come talk to us like you was Jesus and we was Iscariot and you nod as if to say get on with your business and do what you have to do. But I cant remember if me see you or if somebody told me that him see you so that me think I see it too, you stepping out on the back porch, eating a slice of breadfruit, she coming out of nowhere like she have serious business outside at that time of night and shocked, so shocked that you dont have no clothes on, then she reach for your fruit because she want to eat it even though Rasta dont like when woman loose and you both get to midnight raving, and I grab meself and rave too from either seeing it or hearing it, and then you write a song about it. The boy from Concrete Jungle on the same girly green scooter come by for four days at eight in the morning and four in the evening for the brown envelope until the new security squad start to turn him back. We know about that business too. In the Eight Lanes and in Copenhagen City all you can do is watch. Sweet-talking voice on the radio say that crime and violence are taking over the country and if change ever going to come then we will have to wait and see, but all we can do down here in the Eight Lanes is see and wait. And I see shit water run free down the street and I wait. And I see my mother take two men for twenty dollars each and one more who pay twenty-five to stay in instead of pull out and I wait. And I watch my father get so sick and tired of her that he beat her like a dog. And I see the zinc on the roof rust itself brown, and then the rain batter hole into it like foreign cheese, and I see seven people in one room and one pregnant and people fucking anyway because people so poor that they cant even afford shame and I wait. And the little room get smaller and smaller and more sisterbrothercousin come from country, the city getting bigger and bigger and there be no place to rub-a-dub or cut you shit and no chicken back to curry and even when there is it still cost too much money and that little girl get stab because they know she get lunch money every Tuesday and the boys like me getting older and not in school very regular and cant read Dick and Jane but know Coca-Cola, and want to go to a studio and cut a tune and sing hit songs and ride the riddim out of the ghetto but Copenhagen City and the Eight Lanes both too big and every time you reach the

edge, the edge move ahead of you like a shadow until the whole world is a ghetto, and you wait. I see you hungry and waiting and know that it's just luck, you loafing around the studio and Desmond Dekker telling the man to give you a break, and he give you the break because he hear the hunger in your voice before he even hear you sing. You cut a tune, but not a hit song, too pretty for the ghetto even then, for we past the time when prettiness make anybody's life easy. We see you hustle and trying to talk your way twelve inches taller and we want to see you fail. And we know nobody would want you to be a rudeboy anyway for you look like a schemer. And when you disappear to Delaware and come back, you try sing the ska, but ska already left the ghetto to take up residence uptown. Ska take the plane to foreign to show white people that it's just like the twist. Maybe that make the Syrian and the Lebanese proud, but when we see them in the newspaper posing with Air Hostess we not proud, just stunned stupid. You make another song, this time a hit. But one hit cant bounce you out of the ghetto when you recording hits for a vampire. One hit cant make you into Skeeter Davis or the man who sing them Gunfighter Ballads. By the time boy like me drop out of my mother, she give up. Preacher says there is a god-shaped void in everybody life but the only thing ghetto people can fill a void with is void. Nineteen seventy-two is nothing like 1962 and people still whispering for they could never shout that when Artie Jennings dead all of a sudden he take the dream with him. The dream of what I dont know. People stupid. The dream didnt leave, people just dont know a nightmare when they right in the middle of one. More people start moving to the ghetto because Delroy Wilson just sing that Better Must Come and the man who would become Prime Minister sing it too. Better Must Come. Man who look like white man but chat bad like naigger when they have to, singing Better Must Come. Woman who dress like the Queen, who never care about the ghetto before it swell and burst in Kingston singing Better Must Come. But worst come first. Revue de presse Vast and vastly ambitious... much to admire...fascinating...the author's imaginative and stylistic range are impressive. Sunday Times It's like a Tarantino remake of The Harder They Come but with a soundtrack by Bob Marley and a script by Oliver Stone and William Faulkner, with maybe a little creative boost from some primo ganja. It's epic in every sense of that word: sweeping, mythic, over-the-top, colossal and dizzyingly complex. It's also raw, dense, violent, scalding, darkly comic, exhilarating and exhausting a testament to Mr. James's vaulting ambition and prodigious talent. Michiko Kakutani, New York Times Marlon James's writing can be at once punchy and lyrical; can alternate strange, dreamy poetry with visceral action; and can bring persuasive life to a kaleidoscopic range of characters. His gifts are expansive...Extraordinary...a writer whose importance can scarcely be questioned. Independent A vivid novel that deserves all the praise it has received. Sunday Telegraph This seething, hot, violent, action-packed novel is enormous in every sense...the ambition is huge, but [James] pulls it off with huge style, confidence, imagination and wit...Extraordinary. The Times When reading reviews of The Book of Night Women, James apparently became bored with comparisons to Toni Morrison; and with A Brief History, he's got bored with comparisons to Quentin Tarantino. But it is hard not to see the strength of that comparison. This is a novel that explores the aesthetics of cacophony and also the aesthetics of violence. Guardian James has triumphed in capturing the tension, the politics, the heat, chaos, beauty and music of Jamaica. Financial Times A vivid plunge into a crazed, violent and corrupt world, told through multiple narrators and executed with swaggering aplomb...the most original novel I've read in years. Irvine Welsh With comparisons to the works of David Foster Wallace and Quentin Tarantino, James has garnered the highest of contemporary praise. Wired Breaks new ground...a very fluid and superbly controlled work. Spectator Manages consistently to shock and mesmerise at the same time...Best of all is the dialogue ...its musicality is tinged with menace...this tale of a country and its people ravaged and transformed by tragedy packs quite a punch. The Economist A prismatic story of gang violence and Cold War politics in a turbulent post-independence Jamaica. The New Yorker A Brief History of Seven Killings is a masterpiece. Chris Salewicz This novel cracks open a world that needs to be known. It's scary and lyrically beautiful you'll want to read whole pages aloud to strangers. Russell Banks Marlon James has done a hard thing. He's taken a complex, myth-like chapter in the story of an international legend, and given it new life...Poetic, vivid, this is a deeply entertaining read. ShortList An excellent new work of historical fiction...part crime thriller, part oral history, part stream-of-consciousness monologue. Rolling Stone Thrilling, ambitious...Both intense and epic. Los Angeles Times A tour de force...an audacious, demanding, inventive literary work. Wall Street Journal, Best Books of 2014 Epic, immersive, acutely observed and deeply moving, it's worth every long hour it demands of the reader...James's meticulous characterization makes his writing exceptionally vivid and compelling ...a brilliant, heartbreaking and searing (novel) that will burrow its way deep into the reader's soul' --Huffington Post, Best Books of 2014 James's sprawling,

daunting, messy effort is a great if grim success...Brilliant. New Statesman This is the go-for-broke BIG BOOK of the year, a vast, challenging kaleidoscopic historical novel, as told from the edges of history. Hilary Mantel would approve. Chicago Tribune The hottest name in Caribbean literature right now. GQ, Best Books of 2014 It may sound daunting, but the way James uses language is amazing ... Vigorous, intricate and captivating, A Brief History of Seven Killings is hard to put down. Book clubs come running. Ebony This compelling, not-so-brief history brings off a social portrait worthy of Diego Rivera, antic and engag, a fascinating tangle of the naked and the dead. Washington Post, Best Books of 2014 James has written a dangerous book, one full of lore and whispers and history ... a great book. Boston Globe, Best Books of 2014 An exuberant, Balzacian novel by a self-described post-post colonialist writer who is at ease with several canons, traditions and dialects. You ll also find a political novel on the level of Don DeLillo. It s the rare revelation that will easily outlive its hype-cycle. Flavorwire Nothing short of awe-inspiring. Entertainment Weekly This novel should be required reading. Publishers Weekly, Best Books of 2014 [A] magisterial, viscerally lyric epic...The sharp-edged pleasures of this book come from its protean, potent language. Each of James s characters speaks in a distinct (though sometimes shifting) voice and dialect...[like] reading a pulp fiction version of Faulkner s The Sound and the Fury. --Barnes Noble A brilliant novel, highly recommended; one of those big, rich, magisterial works that lets us into a world we really don t know. --Library Journal