



King of the Animals

Stories

JOSH RUSSELL

The innovative and dazzling short stories collected in Josh Russell’s *King of the Animals* explore love and heartbreak, growing up and growing old, cities and suburbs, the fantastic and the everyday.

A teenager and his family seek asylum in an Atlanta IKEA after their split-level is burned down because his father made fun of an autocrat’s bad grammar. A man remembers how seeing a snapshot of his sister naked changed his life—and hers too. A talking doll fails her spelling test, and a king made of sugar and flour watches Fox News and smokes dope with the neighbor kid.

The Chicago Tribune praised Josh Russell’s fiction for “virtuoso storytelling, evocative prose, and original conception,” and in *King of the Animals*, he entwines the extraordinary with the commonplace, leaving us to wonder why we ever thought them separate.

JOSH RUSSELL’s three novels include *My Bright Midnight*, which earned him a fellowship from the National Endowment for the Arts. His short fiction has appeared in *One Story*, *Epoch*, *Subtropics*, and many other magazines and anthologies. Russell is professor of English and director of the creative writing program at Georgia State University. He lives with his wife and daughter in Decatur, Georgia.

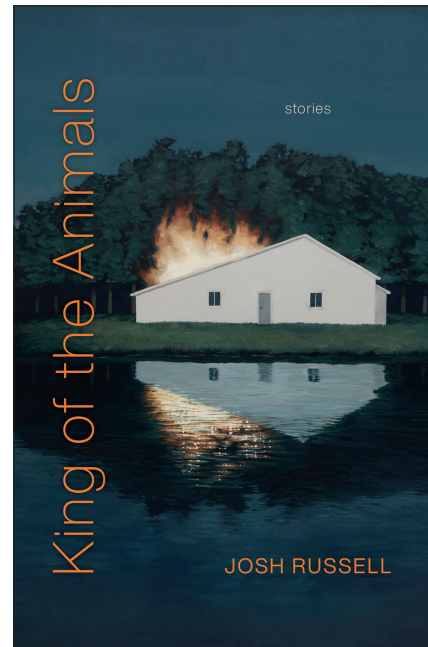
PRAISE FOR *KING OF THE ANIMALS*:

“The forty-seven components of Josh Russell’s engrossing *King of the Animals* are always entertaining, never less than mischievous, constantly surprising, and stunningly well expressed. Yes, they are stories, vignettes, parables, moral tales—but none of those descriptions do them full justice. Let’s just say that Russell is the master of short-form fiction in all its limitless variety.”

—Jim Crace, author of *Being Dead*

“With *King of the Animals*, Josh Russell affirms his status as one of our most shrewdly capable writers. Mortality and transformation, being a child and being a parent, the lifelong process that is growing up—these are but some of the aspects of American life toward which Russell, in stories that vary richly one from the other except in never ending up where you expect them to, aims his telescope. Tenderhearted, funny, and gorgeously written.”

—David Leavitt, author of *Shelter in Place*



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