



WILLIAM FAULKNER

Light in August

WILLIAM FAULKNER'S WORKS

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THE REIVERS (1962)

UNCOLLECTED STORIES OF WILLIAM FAULKNER (1979, POSTHUMOUS)

Light in August

The Corrected Text



WILLIAM FAULKNER

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Contents

Cover

William Faulkner's Works

Title Page

Copyright

Publisher's Note

Chapter 1

Chapter 2

Chapter 3

Chapter 4

Chapter 5

Chapter 6

Chapter 7

Chapter 8

Chapter 9

Chapter 10

Chapter 11

Chapter 12

Chapter 13

Chapter 14

Chapter 15

Chapter 16

Chapter 17

Chapter 18

Chapter 19

Chapter 20

Chapter 21

Editors' Note

William Faulkner (1897–1962)

Also by William Faulkner

Academic Resources for Educators
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Publisher's Note



This edition follows the text of *Light in August* as corrected in 1985. The copy-text for this edition is Faulkner's ribbon setting copy, which—under the direction of Noel Polk—has been compared with the holograph manuscript and carbon typescript. An editors' note on the corrections by Noel Polk follows the text; the line and page notes were prepared by Joseph Blotner.

Sitting beside the road, watching the wagon mount the hill toward her, Lena thinks, ‘I have come from Alabama: a fur piece. All the way from Alabama a-walking. A fur piece.’ Thinking *although I have not been quite a month on the road I am already in Mississippi, further from home than I have ever been before. I am now further from Doane’s Mill than I have been since I was twelve years old*

She had never even been to Doane’s Mill until after her father and mother died, though six or eight times a year she went to town on Saturday, in the wagon, in a mailorder dress and her bare feet flat in the wagon bed and her shoes wrapped in a piece of paper beside her on the seat. She would put on the shoes just before the wagon reached town. After she got to be a big girl she would ask her father to stop the wagon at the edge of town and she would get down and walk. She would not tell her father why she wanted to walk in instead of riding. He thought that it was because of the smooth streets, the sidewalks. But it was because she believed that the people who saw her and whom she passed on foot would believe that she lived in the town too.

When she was twelve years old her father and mother died in the same summer, in a log house of three rooms and a hall, without screens, in a room lighted by a bugswirled kerosene lamp, the naked floor worn smooth as old silver by naked feet. She was the youngest living child. Her mother died first. She said, “Take care of paw.” Lena did so. Then one day her father said, “You go to Doane’s Mill with McKinley. You get ready to go, be ready when he comes.” Then he died. McKinley, the brother, arrived in a wagon. They buried the

father in a grove behind a country church one afternoon, with a pine headstone. The next morning she departed forever, though it is possible that she did not know this at the time, in the wagon with McKinley, for Doane's Mill. The wagon was borrowed and the brother had promised to return it by nightfall.

The brother worked in the mill. All the men in the village worked in the mill or for it. It was cutting pine. It had been there seven years and in seven years more it would destroy all the timber within its reach. Then some of the machinery and most of the men who ran it and existed because of and for it would be loaded onto freight cars and moved away. But some of the machinery would be left, since new pieces could always be bought on the installment plan—gaunt, staring, motionless wheels rising from mounds of brick rubble and ragged weeds with a quality profoundly astonishing, and gutted boilers lifting their rusting and unsmoking stacks with an air stubborn, baffled and bemused upon a stump-pocked scene of profound and peaceful desolation, unplowed, untitled, gutting slowly into red and choked ravines beneath the long quiet rains of autumn and the galloping fury of vernal equinoxes. Then the hamlet which at its best day had borne no name listed on Postoffice Department annals would not now even be remembered by the hookworm-ridden heirs at large who pulled the buildings down and burned them in cookstoves and winter grates.

There were perhaps five families there when Lena arrived. There was a track and a station, and once a day a mixed train fled shrieking through it. The train could be stopped with a red flag, but by ordinary it appeared out of the devastated hills with apparitionlike suddenness and wailing like a banshee, athwart and past that little less-than-village like a forgotten bead from a broken string. The brother was twenty years her senior. She hardly remembered him at all when she came to live with him. He lived in a four room and unpainted house with his labor- and childridden wife. For almost half of every year the sister-in-law was either lying in or recovering. During this time Lena did all the housework and took care of the other children. Later she told herself, 'I reckon that's why I got one so quick myself.'