



WILLIAM FAULKNER

*Intruder in
the Dust*

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“Read, read, read. Read everything—
trash, classics, good and bad, and see
how they do it. Just like a carpenter
who works as an apprentice and studies
the master. Read! You’ll absorb it. Then
write. If it is good, you’ll find out.
If it’s not, throw it out the window.”

—William Faulkner

At once an engrossing murder mystery
and an unflinching portrait of racial
injustice, *Intruder in the Dust* is the story of
Lucas Beauchamp, a black man wrongly
arrested for the murder of a white
man, Vinson Gowrie. Confronting the
threat of lynching, Lucas sets out
to prove his innocence, aided by a white
lawyer, Gavin Stevens, and his young
nephew, Chick Mallison.

“No man ever put more of his
heart and soul into the written word
than did William Faulkner.”

—Eudora Welty

“Faulkner’s greatness resided primarily
in his power to transpose the American
scene as it exists in the Southern
states, filter it through his sensibilities
and finally define it with words.”

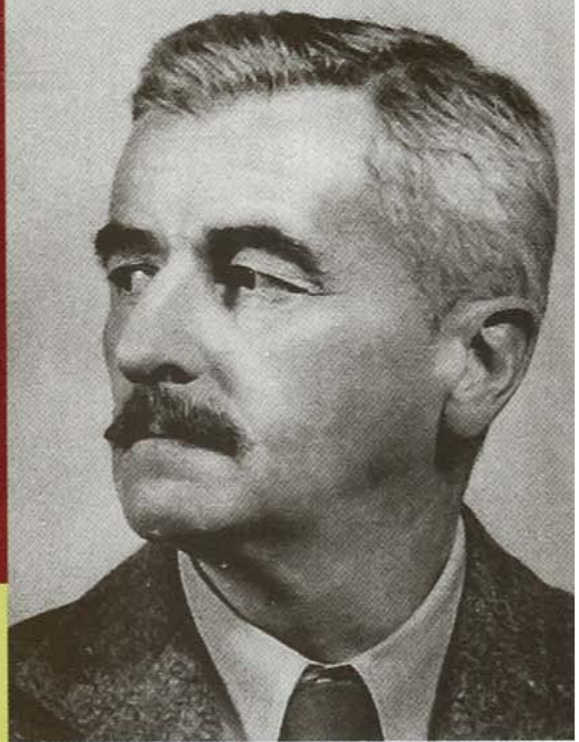
—Richard Wright

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VINTAGE INTERNATIONAL



William Cuthbert Faulkner was
born in 1897 and raised in Oxford,
Mississippi, where he spent most
of his life. One of the towering
figures of American literature, he
is the author of *The Sound and
the Fury*, *Absalom, Absalom!*, and
As I Lay Dying, among many other
remarkable books. Faulkner was
awarded the Nobel Prize in 1950
and France’s Legion of Honor in
1951. He died in 1962.

U.S. \$15.00 Can. \$17.00 Fiction/Literature

ISBN 978-0-679-73651-6



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William Faulkner

INTRUDER IN THE DUST

William Cuthbert Faulkner was born in 1897 in New Albany, Mississippi, the first of four sons of Murry and Maud Butler Falkner (he later added the "u" to the family name himself). In 1904 the family moved to the university town of Oxford, Mississippi, where Faulkner was to spend most of his life. He was named for his great-grandfather "The Old Colonel," a Civil War veteran who built a railroad, wrote a bestselling romantic novel called *The White Rose of Memphis*, became a Mississippi state legislator, and was eventually killed in what may or may not have been a duel with a disgruntled business partner. Faulkner identified with this robust and energetic ancestor and often said that he inherited the "ink stain" from him.

Never fond of school, Faulkner left at the end of football season his senior year of high school, and began working at his grandfather's bank. In 1918, after his plans to marry his sweetheart Estelle Oldham were squashed by their families, he tried to enlist as a pilot in the U.S. Army but was rejected because he did not meet the height and weight requirements. He went to Canada, where he pretended to be an Englishman and joined the RAF training program there. Although he did not complete his training until after the war ended and never saw combat, he returned to his hometown in uniform, boasting of war wounds. He briefly attended the University of Mississippi, where he began to publish his poetry.

After spending a short time living in New York, he again returned to Oxford, where he worked at the university post office. His first book, a collection of poetry, *The Marble Faun*, was published at Faulkner's own expense in 1924. The writer Sherwood Anderson, whom he met in New Orleans in 1925, encouraged him to try writing fiction, and his first novel, *Soldier's Pay*, was published in 1926. It was followed by *Mosquitoes*. His next novel, which he titled *Flags in the Dust*, was rejected by his publisher and twelve others to whom he submitted it. It was eventually published in drastically edited form as *Sartoris* (the original version was not issued until after his death). Meanwhile, he was writing *The Sound and the Fury*, which, after being rejected by one publisher, came out in 1929 and received many ecstatic reviews, although it sold poorly. Yet

again, a new novel, *Sanctuary*, was initially rejected by his publisher, this time as "too shocking." While working on the night shift at a power plant, Faulkner wrote what he was determined would be his masterpiece, *As I Lay Dying*. He finished it in about seven weeks, and it was published in 1930, again to generally good reviews and mediocre sales.

In 1929 Faulkner had finally married his childhood sweetheart, Estelle, after her divorce from her first husband. They had a premature daughter, Alabama, who died ten days after birth in 1931; a second daughter, Jill, was born in 1933.

With the eventual publication of his most sensational and violent (as well as, up till then, most successful) novel, *Sanctuary* (1931), Faulkner was invited to write scripts for MGM and Warner Brothers, where he was responsible for much of the dialogue in the film versions of Hemingway's *To Have and Have Not* and Chandler's *The Big Sleep*, and many other films. He continued to write novels and published many stories in the popular magazines. *Light in August* (1932) was his first attempt to address the racial issues of the South, an effort continued in *Absalom, Absalom!* (1936) and *Go Down, Moses* (1942). By 1946, most of Faulkner's novels were out of print in the United States (although they remained well regarded in Europe), and he was seen as a minor, regional writer. But then the influential editor and critic Malcolm Cowley, who had earlier championed Hemingway and Fitzgerald and others of their generation, put together the *Portable Faulkner*, and once again Faulkner's genius was recognized, this time for good. He received the 1949 Nobel Prize for Literature as well as many other awards and accolades, including the National Book Award and the Gold Medal from the American Academy of Arts and Letters and France's Legion of Honor.

In addition to several collections of short fiction, his other novels include *Pylon* (1935), *The Unvanquished* (1938), *The Wild Palms* (1939), *The Hamlet* (1940), *Intruder in the Dust* (1948), *A Fable* (1954), *The Town* (1957), *The Mansion* (1959), and *The Reivers* (1962).

William Faulkner died of a heart attack on July 6, 1962, in Oxford, Mississippi, where he is buried.

INTRUDER IN THE DUST

BOOKS BY WILLIAM FAULKNER

- The Marble Faun* (1924)
Soldier's Pay (1926)
Mosquitoes (1927)
Sartoris (1929) [*Flags in the Dust* (1973)]
The Sound and the Fury (1929)
As I Lay Dying (1930)
Sanctuary (1931)
These 13 (1931)
Light in August (1932)
A Green Bough (1933)
Doctor Martino and Other Stories (1934)
Pylon (1935)
Absalom, Absalom! (1936)
The Unvanquished (1938)
The Wild Palms [*If I Forget Thee, Jerusalem*] (1939)
The Hamlet (1940)
Go Down, Moses (1942)
Intruder in the Dust (1948)
Knight's Gambit (1949)
Collected Stories of William Faulkner (1950)
Notes on a Horsethief (1951)
Requiem for a Nun (1954)
A Fable (1954)
Big Woods (1955)
The Town (1957)
The Mansion (1959)
The Reivers (1962)
Uncollected Stories of William Faulkner (1979, Posthumous)

William Faulkner

INTRUDER
IN THE DUST

VINTAGE INTERNATIONAL

Vintage Books

A Division of Random House, Inc.

New York



SECOND VINTAGE INTERNATIONAL EDITION, AUGUST 2011

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Library of Congress Cataloging-in-Publication Data
Faulkner, William.

Intruder in the dust / William Faulkner.

p. cm.

I. Title.

PS3511.A86I5 1991

813'.52—dc20 91-50014

Vintage ISBN: 978-0-679-73651-6

www.vintagebooks.com

Printed in the United States of America

10 9 8 7 6 5 4 3 2 1

PUBLISHER'S NOTE

This edition of *Intruder in the Dust* follows the text as corrected in 1994 by Noel Polk. The copy-text for this edition is the ribbon typescript setting copy at the Alderman Library of the University of Virginia. An editors' note on the corrections by Noel Polk follows the text; the line and page notes were prepared by Joseph Blotner.

PUBLISHER'S NOTE

This edition of *Intruder in the Dust* follows the text as corrected in copy by Miss Fells. The copy-text for this edition is the 1948 edition setting copy at the Aldine-McClurg Library of the University of Virginia. An editors' note on the copyright page follows the text. The title and page notes were prepared by Joseph Blumenthal.

INTRUDER IN THE DUST

By LINDA NEWSON
Illustrated by
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Published by
LINDA NEWSON
New York, N. Y.

One

It was just noon that Sunday morning when the sheriff reached the jail with Lucas Beauchamp though the whole town (the whole county too for that matter) had known since the night before that Lucas had killed a white man.

He was there, waiting. He was the first one, standing lounging trying to look occupied or at least innocent, under the shed in front of the closed blacksmith's shop across the street from the jail where his uncle would be less likely to see him if or rather when he crossed the Square toward the post-office for the eleven o'clock mail.

Because he knew Lucas Beauchamp too—as well that is as any white person knew him. Better than any maybe unless it was Carothers Edmonds on whose place Lucas lived seventeen miles from town, because he had eaten a meal in Lucas' house. It was in the early winter four years ago; he had been only twelve then and it had happened this way: Edmonds was a friend of his uncle; they had been in school at the same time at the State University, where his uncle had gone after he came back from Harvard and Heidelberg to learn enough law to get himself chosen County Attorney, and the day before Edmonds had come in to town to see his uncle on some county business and had stayed the night with them and at supper that evening Edmonds had said to him:

'Come out home with me tomorrow and go rabbit hunting;' and then to his mother: 'I'll send him back in tomorrow afternoon. I'll send a boy along with him while he's out with his gun;' and then to him again: 'He's got a good dog.'

'He's got a boy,' his uncle said and Edmonds said:

'Does his boy run rabbits too?' and his uncle said:

'We'll promise he wont interfere with yours.'

So the next morning he and Aleck Sander went home with Edmonds. It was cold that morning, the first winter cold-snap; the hedgerows were rimed and stiff with frost and the standing water in the roadside drainage ditches was skimmed with ice and even the edges of the running water in the Nine Mile branch glinted fragile and scintillant like fairy glass and from the first farmyard they passed and then again and again and again came the windless tang of woodsmoke and they could see in the back yards the black iron pots already steaming while women in the sunbonnets still of summer or men's old felt hats and long men's overcoats stoked wood under them and the men with crokersack aprons tied with wire over their overalls whetted knives or already moved about the pens where hogs grunted and squealed, not quite startled, not alarmed but just alerted as though sensing already even though only dimly their rich and immanent destiny; by night-fall the whole land would be hung with their spectral intact tallowcolored empty carcasses immobilised by the heels in attitudes of frantic running as though full tilt at the center of the earth.

And he didn't know how it happened. The boy, one of Edmonds' tenant's sons, older and larger than Aleck Sander who in his turn was larger than he although they were the same age, was waiting at the house with the dog—a true rab-

bit dog, some hound, a good deal of hound, maybe mostly hound, redbone and black-and-tan with maybe a little pointer somewhere once, a potlicker, a nigger dog which it took but one glance to see had an affinity a rapport with rabbits such as people said Negroes had with mules—and Aleck Sander already had his tapstick—one of the heavy nuts which bolt railroad rails together, driven onto a short length of broomhandle—which Aleck Sander could throw whirling end over end at a running rabbit pretty near as accurately as he could shoot the shotgun—and Aleck Sander and Edmonds' boy with tapsticks and he with the gun they went down through the park and across a pasture to the creek where Edmonds' boy knew the footlog was and he didn't know how it happened, something a girl might have been expected and even excused for doing but nobody else, halfway over the footlog and not even thinking about it who had walked the top rail of a fence many a time twice that far when all of a sudden the known familiar sunny winter earth was upside down and flat on his face and still holding the gun he was rushing not away from the earth but away from the bright sky and he could remember still the thin bright tinkle of the breaking ice and how he didn't even feel the shock of the water but only of the air when he came up again. He had dropped the gun too so he had to dive, submerge again to find it, back out of the icy air into the water which as yet felt neither, neither cold or not and where even his sodden garments—boots and thick pants and sweater and hunting coat—didn't even feel heavy but just slow, and found the gun and tried again for bottom then thrashed one-handed to the bank and trading water and clinging to a willow-branch he reached the gun up until someone took it; Edmonds'

boy obviously since at that moment Aleck Sander rammed down at him the end of a long pole, almost a log whose first pass struck his feet out from under him and sent his head under again and almost broke his hold on the willow until a voice said:

'Get the pole out of his way so he can get out'—just a voice, not because it couldn't be anybody else but either Aleck Sander or Edmonds' boy but because it didn't matter whose: climbing out now with both hands among the willows, the skim ice crinkling and tinkling against his chest, his clothes like soft cold lead which he didn't move in but seemed rather to mount into like a poncho or a tarpaulin: up the bank until he saw two feet in gum boots which were neither Edmonds' boy's nor Aleck Sander's and then the legs, the overalls rising out of them and he climbed on and stood up and saw a Negro man with an axe on his shoulder, in a heavy sheeplined coat and a broad pale felt hat such as his grandfather had used to wear, looking at him and that was when he saw Lucas Beauchamp for the first time that he remembered or rather for the first time because you didn't forget Lucas Beauchamp; gasping, shaking and only now feeling the shock of the cold water, he looked up at the face which was just watching him without pity commiseration or anything else, not even surprise: just watching him, whose owner had made no effort whatever to help him up out of the creek, had in fact ordered Aleck Sander to desist with the pole which had been the one token toward help that anybody had made—a face which in his estimation might have been under fifty or even forty except for the hat and the eyes, and inside a Negro's skin but that was all even to a boy of twelve shaking with cold and still panting from shock and exertion because what looked

out of it had no pigment at all, not even the white man's lack of it, not arrogant, not even scornful: just intractable and composed. Then Edmonds' boy said something to the man, speaking a name: something Mister Lucas: and then he knew who the man was, remembering the rest of the story which was a piece, a fragment of the county's chronicle which few if any knew better than his uncle: how the man was son of one of old Carothers McCaslin's, Edmonds' great grandfather's, slaves who had been not just old Carothers' slave but his son too: standing and shaking steadily now for what seemed to him another whole minute while the man stood looking at him with nothing whatever in his face. Then the man turned, speaking not even back over his shoulder, already walking, not even waiting to see if they heard, let alone were going to obey:

'Come on to my house'

'I'll go back to Mr Edmonds' he said. 'I'm not going to look back. He didn't even answer.'

'Tote his gun, Joe,' he said.

So he followed, with Edmonds' boy and Aleck Sander following him, in single file along the creek toward the bridge and the road. Soon he had stopped shaking; he was just cold and wet now and most of that would go if he just kept moving. They crossed the bridge. Ahead now was the gate where the drive went up through the park to Edmonds' house. It was almost a mile; he would probably be dry and warm both by the time he got there and he still believed he was going to turn in at the gate and even after he knew that he wasn't or anyway hadn't, already beyond it now, he was still telling himself the reason was that, although Edmonds was a bachelor and there were no women in the house, Edmonds himself

might refuse to let him out of the house again until he could be returned to his mother, still telling himself this even after he knew that the true reason was that he could no more imagine himself contradicting the man striding on ahead of him than he could his grandfather, not from any fear of nor even the threat of reprisal but because like his grandfather the man striding ahead of him was simply incapable of conceiving himself by a child contradicted and defied.

So he didn't even check when they passed the gate, he didn't even look at it and now they were in no well-used tended lane leading to tenant or servant quarters and marked by walking feet but a savage gash half gully and half road mounting a hill with an air solitary independent and intractable too and then he saw the house, the cabin and remembered the rest of the story, the legend: how Edmonds' father had deeded to his Negro first cousin and his heirs in perpetuity the house and the ten acres of land it sat in—an oblong of earth set forever in the middle of the two thousand acre plantation like a postage stamp in the center of an envelope—the paintless wooden house, the paintless picket fence whose paintless latchless gate the man kneed open still without stopping or once looking back and, he following and Aleck Sander and Edmonds' boy following him, strode on into the yard. It would have been grassless even in summer; he could imagine it, completely bare, no weed no sprig of anything, the dust each morning swept by some of Lucas' womenfolks with a broom made of willow switches bound together, into an intricate series of whorls and overlapping loops which as the day advanced would be gradually and slowly defaced by the droppings and the cryptic three-toed prints of chickens like (remembering it now at sixteen) a terrain in miniature

out of the age of the great lizards, the four of them walking in what was less than walk because its surface was dirt too yet more than path, the footpacked strip running plumbline straight between two borders of tin cans and empty bottles and shards of china and earthenware set into the ground, up to the paintless steps and the paintless gallery along whose edge sat more cans but larger—empty gallon buckets which had once contained molasses or perhaps paint and wornout water or milk pails and one five-gallon can for kerosene with its top cut off and half of what had once been somebody's (Edmonds' without doubt) kitchen hot water tank sliced longways like a banana—out of which flowers had grown last summer and from which the dead stalks and the dried and brittle tendrils still leaned and drooped, and beyond this the house itself, gray and weathered and not so much paintless as independent of and intractable to paint so that the house was not only the one possible continuation of the stern untended road but was its crown too as the carved ailanthus leaves are the Greek column's capital.

Nor did the man pause yet, up the steps and across the gallery and opened the door and entered and he and then Edmonds' boy and Aleck Sander followed: a hall dim even almost dark after the bright outdoors and already he could smell that smell which he had accepted without question all his life as being the smell always of the places where people with any trace of Negro blood live as he had that all people named Mallison are Methodists, then a bedroom: a bare worn quite clean paintless rugless floor, in one corner and spread with a bright patchwork quilt a vast shadowy tester bed which had probably come out of old ZabanBook.com and a battered cheap Grand Rapids dresser and then fo