



Prince Edward: A Novel

Dennis McFarland

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A young boy's life-and that of the Southern town he lives in-is dramatically changed over the course of a single historic summer in this unforgettable novel

In August of 1959, Benjamin Rome is ten years old, and his hometown of Farmville, in Prince Edward County, Virginia, is immersed in a frenzy of activity. The Supreme Court has ordered the state to desegregate its public schools; on the heels of the failed "massive resistance" movement, the county has instead voted to close them. With only a few weeks in which to establish a private, whites-only system, most of Ben's family is involved in the effort: his grandfather, Daddy Cary, has the ringleaders making speeches at his sixty-fifth birthday party; his father and his older brother "borrow" Farmville High's lights for the new football field; his mother volunteers at the library book drive.

Come September, the Negro children will have no schools to attend, and that includes Ben's close friend Burghardt, the son of the hired hand who works on Daddy Cary's farm. Ben has always known that the lives of Negroes and whites are separated by a "color line," but none of what he has known seems to make sense anymore. When events lead to an explosive climax, Ben finds himself facing choices beyond his years; it will be a long time before he begins to understand all he learns that summer-one of the hottest on record, and, for him, the longest and most important.

In this, his fifth and finest book, Dennis McFarland evokes, with his customary art and compassion, a wrenching chapter in our nation's history.

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