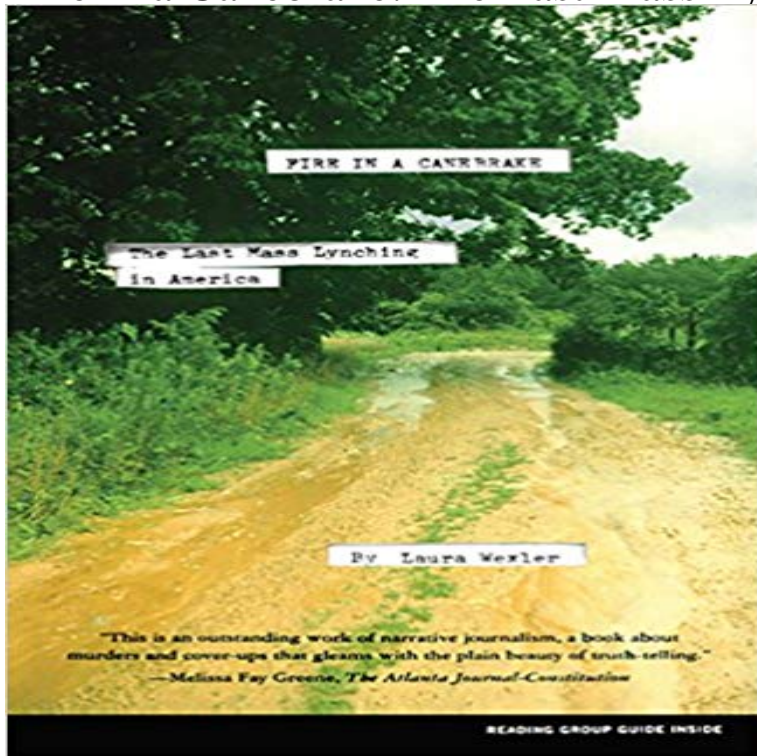


Fire in a Canebrake: The Last Mass Lynching in America



On that July evening in 1946, the leader counted aloud and the mob of white men fired. Seconds later, the leader counted again, One, two, three, and the mob fired once more. After the third and final volley of gunshots, the white men got into their cars and drove off, leaving the bullet-ridden bodies of two young black men and two young black women lying in the dirt near Moores Ford Bridge in rural Walton County, Georgia. Since that summer evening, there have never been as many victims lynched in a single day in America. Now, more than a half century later, Laura Wexler offers the first full account of the Moores Ford lynching, a murder so brutal it stunned the nation and motivated President Harry Truman to put civil rights at the forefront of his national agenda. With the style of a novelist, the authority of a historian, and the tenacity of a journalist, Wexler recounts the lynching and the resulting four-month FBI investigation. Drawing from interviews, archival sources, and an uncensored FBI report, she takes us deep into the landscape of 1946 Georgia, creating unforgettable portraits of sharecroppers, sheriffs, bootleggers, the victims, and the men who may have killed them. *Fire in a Canebrake* pursues the legacy of the Moores Ford lynching into the present, exploring the conflicting memories of Walton County's black and white citizens and examining the testimony of a white man who claims he was a secret witness to the crime. In 2001, the governor of Georgia issued a new reward for information leading to the arrest of the lynchers. Several suspects named in the FBI's 1946 investigation are still alive, and there is no statute of limitations on the crime of murder. *Fire in a Canebrake* -- a phrase local people used to describe the sound of the fatal gunshots -- is a moving and often frightening tale of violence, sex, and lies. It is also a disturbing snapshot of a divided nation on the brink of the civil

rights movement and a haunting meditation on race, history, and the struggle for truth.

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