



# Reading My Father: A Memoir

*Alexandra Styron*

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PART MEMOIR AND PART ELEGY, READING MY FATHER IS THE STORY OF A DAUGHTER COMING TO KNOW HER FATHER AT LAST— A GIANT AMONG TWENTIETH-CENTURY AMERICAN NOVELISTS AND A MAN WHOSE DEVASTATING DEPRESSION DARKENED THE FAMILY LANDSCAPE.

In *Reading My Father*, William Styron's youngest child explores the life of a fascinating and difficult man whose own memoir, *Darkness Visible*, so searingly chronicled his battle with major depression. Alexandra Styron's parents—the Pulitzer Prize-winning author of *Sophie's Choice* and his political activist wife, Rose—were, for half a century, leading players on the world's cultural stage. Alexandra was raised under both the halo of her father's brilliance and the long shadow of his troubled mind.

A drinker, a carouser, and above all “a high priest at the altar of fiction,” Styron helped define the concept of The Big Male Writer that gave so much of twentieth-century American fiction a muscular, glamorous aura. In constant pursuit of The Great Novel, he and his work were the dominant force in his family's life, his turbulent moods the weather in their ecosystem.

From Styron's Tidewater, Virginia, youth and precocious literary debut to the triumphs of his best-known books and on through his spiral into depression, *Reading My Father* portrays the epic sweep of an American artist's life, offering a ringside seat on a great literary generation's friendships and their dramas. It is also a tale of filial love, beautifully written, with humor, compassion, and grace.

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