



## Lick Creek

*Brad Kessler*

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## **Lick Creek** Brad Kessler

Set in the remote mining country of West Virginia in the late twenties, Lick Creek is the compelling story of a fiery young woman, Emily Jenkins, and what happens when progress -- and tragedy -- comes to her family's farm. Brad Kessler has a generous and keen eye for natural landscape and its power in human life. In his profound, dramatic first novel, he explores the complex intersections of faith, tradition, and innovation.

After the coal mine deaths of her father, brother, and the first man she loved, Emily struggles to support herself and her mother. When construction begins on the power lines, she blames the intruders for everything that has gone awry -- for her mother's increasing withdrawal from life and for lives already lost. Then, an electrical worker is struck by lightning. Brought to their farmhouse unconscious and badly injured, Joseph is taken in by Emily's mother, and Emily is seduced by the mystery of his past, his immigration from Russia, his own mother's deportations, and the world of immigrants forced to flee persecution in their homelands.

Moving from romance to high drama, Kessler illuminates the role of electricity in the transformation of rural life and the particular electricity between two vastly different people whose worlds and passions collide.

## **Lick Creek Details**

Date : Published February 26th 2002 by Scribner Book Company (first published 2001)

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Author : Brad Kessler

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## From Reader Review Lick Creek for online ebook

### **Angela says**

I was impressed with Brad Kessler's writing. It is poetic and descriptive, and I loved how it transported me to the natural beauty of West Virginia in another era. The story kept me engaged and looking forward to reading time. The ending seemed a bit rushed, but I definitely want to read another book by this author.

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### **Becky says**

Goat rearing to plane crashes to coal mines. Finishing off books by Brad Kessler. So far, I've enjoyed the non-fiction goats the best.

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### **Diana Jackson says**

A good read, set in the heart of America. A haunting tale

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### **Evan says**

This book will make you want to read it fast, but don't. If you do, you might miss the nuance and the beautiful language. This is not a flowery book, don't misunderstand. But its descriptions are so clear and skillfully written, they are almost poetic. I did not care for the ending of this book. However, that is the author's prerogative to have whatever plot he or she sees fit. This is a realistic book with characters who are not perfect or idealized in any way. They are very human. I had to give this book a rare (for me) 5 star rating because of the stunning style in which it is written. It also gets points for being obviously well-researched and engaging.

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### **Catherine says**

I liked this quite well most of the way through, but the last 50 pages went from improbably bad to even worse. It was like the author was boring himself and made several abrupt 180s in the plot to keep himself awake.

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### **Jerri Bell says**

Evocative and well-written. The characters are engaging and draw the reader in from the first page. I gave it a 4 instead of a 5 because I found the plot somewhat predictable. It reminds me of a short story I read years ago about a young West Virginia woman seduced by a power company executive (can't remember the title or

author, though).

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### **Mckinley says**

THis was really enjoyable, up to the last short bit. The story is interesting, sense of place is strongly developed and I liked the writing style. However the ending doesn't match the rest of the writing; it's cut short and underdeveloped. Too bad for that.

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### **Saleh MoonWalker says**

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### **Kim Fowler says**

Another random find at the library. I'm a sucker for books like this - descriptive stories of another-era life in the country. This one intersects with the introduction of electricity era. I adore an author that can make me feel like I'm in the woods or mountains in 2 paragraphs.

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### **Clarinda Dodson says**

*This review was originally posted on my blog in 2006.*

Very enjoyable book! **Lick Creek** takes place in the small coal mining community of (surprise, surprise) Lick Creek, WV, during the late 1920s.

It tells the story of young girl (teenage), Emily Jenkins, who lives on a family farm. Her father, brother, and first love die in a coal mine explosion. Her mother goes into severe depression dealing with such a loss and at times doesn't even bother to get dressed. Emily is forced to become quite resourceful in order to provide for her and her mother. She takes to gathering berries, mushrooms and making goat cheese, and then traveling to the city of White Sulfur to sell these items to the fancy hotel.

During this time period, electricity is booming. Many electric lines are being installed--some right near Lick Creek. One of the lineman falls from a pole during a thunderstorm, and his crew brings him to the Jenkins home. Having this injured man in the house, breathes life back into Ada Jenkins, Emily's mother. She nurses him back to health. During his time at the Jenkins, he develops a strong relationship with Emily.

One of the things that really intrigued me about this book was how different things were back then. Would any of us know what to do if a man came to our homes with a dislocated shoulder, a broken leg, a gash to the head and a concussion? There were no phones (or at least the Jenkins didn't have one), and the nearest doctor was far enough away that he wouldn't be able to come until at least the next day. I was impressed that Ada knew just what to do! First aid was just second nature to her.

*Just a warning...there are a few bad words in this book. Also, Emily does fall in love a few times, so there are a few scenes that are descriptive of this. I'd say it was nothing too explicit and it is very tastefully written, but just a warning that it is there.*

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### **Jeanette "Astute Crabbist" says**

I really got a charge out of this one. :D :D :D

I love the way Brad Kessler writes. There's such a quiet knowingness in his words, even when he's writing about traumatic events. I also love the way he weaves little bits of arcana and esoterica into his narratives without appearing to be trying too hard or showing off.

What Lick Creek is about is electricity, of all things! It takes place in 1920s West Virginia, when rural electrification projects were in full swing. Emily Jenkins and her mother Ada are barely getting by since an explosion in the coal mine killed the menfolk of the family. Emily begins taking foodstuffs to White Sulphur and sells them to the hotel. In the course of these trips she gains some worldly education that leaves her emotionally scarred and seething with anger.

When the electric company begins building towers near the Jenkins home, Emily cultivates a friendship with a lineman named Joseph, who is originally from Russia. Over time he reveals to her his secrets. Emily keeps her own secrets bottled up inside, and the rage builds until the opportunity for revenge presents itself. These revenge scenes are some of Kessler's finest moments. He shows how Emily's fermented rage and helplessness finally boil over into her need to violate and defile the person who wronged her.

Lick Creek was Kessler's first novel. I liked his second novel, Birds in Fall, a little better. That's probably mostly due to subject matter. I wasn't all that into the sections describing what the electric company guys were doing. But taken as a whole, I really liked the book. Once in a while Kessler would surprise me with an unexpected jolt when the plot would take a turn I wasn't at all anticipating.

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### **Carolyn S says**

Liked Brad's style, and the book read quickly. I would give it 3 1/2, if allowed. Not really an uplifting book, but seems like a great coal mine book. Really surprising ending, not really good ending, but I did like the book.

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### **Mich says**

thot this was actually pretty good considering other reviews. i picked it up at half price books for \$2 and it was WELL worth that and more. yeah, i'd say give it a whirl

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### **Robyn Yeary says**

Sad, tragic. The young women Emily has suffered great loss at a young age, and has a bit of an edge to her. I feel like she was always walking a tight rope and ready to fall off the edge at any moment. Can't tell you if she snaps or not, that would ruin it. I keep thinking what she would have accomplished in life with her strong well and feistiness, had she lived in another place under different circumstances. It was a fast, easy read, well written, just a bit too depressing for me.

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### **Felice says**

didn't like the main character... couldn't stand the end of the book.

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### **Cheryl says**

Good book. If you like coal mining you will like this. He's a great author.

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### **Cheryl says**

Tenderly written tale of loss, grief, recovery, and love. Sensual and deeply rooted in the Appalachian landscape. Incredibly well-balanced, like a complex and satisfying wine.

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### **David says**

I would have given this book more stars except the author seems to have gotten in a hurry near the end. There were a number of loose ends and the beautiful flow disappeared making the ending out of sync with the rest of the book.

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### **BookGirl says**

I really enjoyed the book. I do think the ending is a bit abrupt (and sad) but overall a good read.

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### **Diane says**

Not as good as Birds in Fall or Goat Song, but excellently written and could make a great period movie, depending on who did it. The problem is probably less with the book than with me, as I'm not that fond of action sequences and tense situations in books. I'm more fond of the contemplative side of things, which is also here. I kept wondering as I began the book if it's possible for a coal mine to appear in a book or movie

and some kind of mining accident NOT ensue after awhile? I kind of doubt it. Meanwhile, the characters are well worth spending time with - Emily & Joseph. I liked it well enough.

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