



Lost Mountain: A Year in the Vanishing Wilderness: Radical Strip Mining and the Devastation of Appalachia

Erik Reece

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A groundbreaking work of literary nonfiction that exposes how radical strip mining is destroying one of America's most precious natural resources and the communities that depend on it.

The mountains of Appalachia are home to one of the great forests of the world—they predate the Ice Age and scientists refer to them as the "rainforests" of North America for their remarkable density and species diversity. These mountains also hold the mother lode of American coal, and the coalmining industry has long been the economic backbone for families in a region hard-pressed for other job opportunities. But recently, a new type of mining has been introduced—"radical strip mining," aka "mountaintop removal"—in which a team employing no more than ten men and some heavy machinery literally blast off the top of a mountain, dump it in the valley below, and scoop out the coal.

Erik Reece chronicles the year he spent witnessing the systematic decimation of a single mountain, aptly named "Lost Mountain." A native Kentuckian and the son of a coal worker, Reece makes it clear that strip mining is neither a local concern nor a radical contention, but a mainstream crisis that encompasses every hot-button issue—from corporate hubris and government neglect, to class conflict and poisoned groundwater, to irrevocable species extinction and landscape destruction. Published excerpts of *Lost Mountain* are already driving headlines and legislative action in Kentucky.

In Erik Reece, the mountains of Kentucky have found an eloquent and powerful spokesman in the tradition of Edward Abbey, Rachel Carson, Aldo Leopold, and Henry David Thoreau. Like the work of those writers before him, *Lost Mountain* will stand as a landmark defense of a natural treasure—and a core part of our national identity—on the verge of extinction, and as the introduction of a mighty new literary voice.

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