



Wonderland Creek

Lynn Austin

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Lynn Austin Will Delight Readers with Her Winsome Heroine

Alice Grace Ripley lives in a dream world, her nose stuck in a book. But happily-ever-after life she's planned on suddenly falls apart when her boyfriend, Gordon, breaks up with her, accusing her of living in a world of fiction instead of the real world. Then to top it off, Alice loses her beloved job at the library because of cutbacks due to the Great Depression.

Fleeing small-town gossip, Alice heads to the mountains of eastern Kentucky to deliver five boxes of donated books to the library in the tiny coal-mining village of Acorn. Dropped off by her relatives, Alice volunteers to stay for two weeks to help the librarian, Leslie McDougal.

But the librarian turns out to be far different than she anticipated--not to mention the four lady librarians who travel to the remote homes to deliver the much-desired books. While Alice is trapped in Acorn against her will, she soon finds that real-life adventure and mystery--and especially romance--are far better than her humble dreams could have imagined.

Wonderland Creek Details

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From Reader Review *Wonderland Creek* for online ebook

Anne says

This review is *shockingly* late. I'm sorry friends. The truth is, I don't know WHAT to say about this book. It was so surreal, so fantastical, so beautiful, so...I just don't know. I don't know how to explain this book, I don't think it's even possible (I shouldn't even be allowed to review it, because I can feel I'm about to ramble and probably won't make much sense). I've never read a book like *Wonderland Creek*, that's for sure, but it's the kind of book I think everyone should try at least one.

It's a story that makes you think and makes you re-evaluate your life choices (maybe, perhaps, I don't know...it might be just me :P), but at the same you're not sure if you should take it seriously because the story is so implausible. It's fun and exciting for the most part, features really interesting characters, but sometimes (often) it bordered on the impossible. However, it sure got the point across, and it's worth reading just for the character of Alice.

Written in first person POV, *Wonderland Creek* read almost like Alice's diary, and the execution and the writing themselves alone deserve a five-star rating. In fact, I'm giving it a full 5 more because of the quality than my enjoyment, because although I loved it, there were a few things that left me disappointed. But, for now, back to Alice. That girl was wonderful. She was direct, honest and just straight-up hilarious. I loved her comments, her perspective, her loyalty and her desire to do good. I'd never encountered a heroine like her before, and I'm sorry. She is definitely high on my list of favourites!! I really admire Lynn Austin's talent for creating characters that go through such impressive personal growth. If you compare the Alice from the beginning and the Alice from the end, you'll find the same, beautiful blond-haired young woman full of charm and dreams, but the first Alice was lost in her dreams, while the second Alice takes control and makes her dreams happen.

I loved the various feels of this book; it's dreamy, sometimes heart-wrenching, sometimes sad, mostly exciting, and always beautiful. It takes place in the middle of nowhere in 1930's Kentucky (small town called Acorn), where there is no electricity, no running water and no cars. To city girl Alice from Illinois, it feels like being thrown back in the Middle Ages, and she's not shy enough not to let everybody know that. She finds herself having to take care of a wounded man, a hundred-year old woman, a lonely pregnant neighbour, and is responsible for delivering books to various scattered townspeople. I was expecting city-courting and pretty hats, outings to the theatre and afternoon teas, but...nope. There was danger, mystery, murder, treasure-hunting, family feuds and assassination attempts, and the only "quiet" moments were about garden-planting or learning to bake bread.

I'm not going to lie though, for all the action (and a lot of it highly far-fetched), I was often a little bored. I know, I know. What the hell, who could be bored that book was so beautiful!! But I found it to be a bit repetitive sometimes, and wish things could have sped up. There were also several things for which I was highly anticipating some sort of conclusion, and they never happened, and some things for which said conclusion was unsatisfactory.

(view spoiler)

Overall though, I have to admit this book is incredibly good, and most definitely a memorable read. The character of Lillie was an absolutely brilliant creation, and gave a whole new dimension to the story. I doubt I will ever find a book like *Wonderland Creek* again, but thank goodness I still have many Austin books to read!!

Definitely recommended :D

Jazzy says

OH MY WORD THIS WAS AMAZING.

Katie W says

"If my life were a book, no one would read it. People would say it was too boring, too predictable." Right from that very first line, I felt myself identify with Alice. I look at myself at times and wonder what I've accomplished in my life. Like Alice, I often find my nose in a book and love to escape "real" life and live the lives of fictional characters. As she unfortunately discovered, that kind of life can't protect a person from heartache. When her life falls apart, she comes up with a plan, but like most plans, it doesn't go anything like she....well...planned.

Lynn Austin managed to transport me straight into the heart of the Kentucky backwoods during the Great Depression and left a lasting impression on me through her fantastically sumptuous writing, splendid characters, and outlandish experiences. The whole book is vividly imprinted on my mind and I've been thinking about it for days now. The events are so unbelievable, but don't they say that sometimes real life is stranger than fiction?

The characters are an unlikely bunch that melted into my heart like a chocolate left in the sun. Literally forced to help these Kentucky residents, Alice learns so much about herself along the way and the growth she exhibits is stunning as she truly comes to life. I think I need to learn from her and actually live in the here and now. I loved these characters so much, especially the plucky 100 year old, Miss Lillie.

I love the library system that is used in this rural area and had no idea that it actually existed. I love learning a little history, along with being entertained.

Content: very mild romance; mild+ religious elements; mild violence.

Kav says

How's this for an opening line: "If my life was a book, no one would read it." Told in first-person, Alice goes on to prove herself wrong in this funny and poignant and completely spell-binding story. I bonded with Alice on the very first page -- I mean how could I resist a passionate bibliophile with a penchant for getting into trouble? Alice may live in the pages of her beloved books when we first meet her but she quickly begins writing her own absorbing story when life happens...in a really big way.

This book is full of surprises and priceless gems of wisdom and humour and tender romance, not to mention the deeper kind. It's Alice's journey out of fiction and into the real world and it's a marvel to watch her eyes open as she sees reality for the first time. She fights it tooth and nail, of course, feet dragging as petulantly as any self-centered young woman might. But her adventures along Wonderland Creek leave her transformed.

This coming-of-age story put me in mind of *The Waltons*. Same depression era and small-town life. Austin's descriptions are rich and set the tone and setting of the rural south. Even more importantly, she manages to capture the desperation of the Depression while capturing the strength of the people. Lillie, a secondary character drew me in page after page. It's a marvel how Austin wove seemingly separate threads into a beautiful tapestry of words and emotions.

Wonderland Creek is a book of substance and beauty and well worth the read.

Elaina says

Loved certain aspects of this book...but the romance wasn't one of them ? The story was different than I was expecting though and I liked it. Lily was great! She had me laughing a lot ? I thought the end could have been a little bit better, but it was a nice read.

Rebekah Brown says

Wonderland Creek is my first novel from Lynn Austin. If it's any hint of how I feel about Wonderland Creek, I am currently reading another novel from Lynn Austin right now. Austin is great at transporting her readers to the setting of the story, often a special time and place in US history. I really enjoyed learning about the running of libraries during the early 1900's and the women who would deliver books to their community. Imagine if we continued serving the community in this way today, how many lives could be impacted with a single book. Children whose parents do not value a trip to library, or a elder man or woman who cannot leave their home could be deeply impacted.

Alice (Allie) is character that thoroughly annoyed me to no end, but at the same time it's hard not to like her. Alice's character development throughout her stay in Wonderland Creek is wonderful to witness, as she begins the story as a self centered and somewhat ignorant woman. Even though I have a strong love for reading, I cannot imagine reading a book during someone's funeral! Come to think of it, I feel the same way about most if not all of the characters in the novel. Ms. Lillie is a richly developed character, someone you would love to spend time story telling with. However, the lying and conniving behavior started to get under my skin quite a bit. As for Mack,I feel he was somewhat underdeveloped, especially when it came to his relationship with Allie. Why did they even like each other? I definitely never saw the connection or draw between the two. And the ending of how they ended up together...Let's just say I was not convinced. The lack of romance and relationship development was a flaw in this story in my opinion.

All in all, I enjoyed Wonderland Creek. I am hoping that the next Austin novel I read also provides wonderful characters, but with more romance :)

Shantelle says

Would you like something different than the standard Christian, historical-fiction? Well, then do pick up *Wonderland Creek!* :) This was a unique, sweet, and thoughtful tale, which I quite enjoyed!

I mean, who of us book addicts can't relate to blonde-haired, dreamy-eyed Alice of Illinois? She mundanely goes about her real life, and lives all her adventures in books. She has a boyfriend, but is she in love? No. She has a "best friend", but perhaps its only convenient for her; and her friend gets nothing out of the arrangement. Will she help her father and mother with their missions to the poor and needy? Of course not! How ghastly! She'll just keep up her proper work at the library... OF COURSE. Alice really lives in books. Until... Kentucky.

There she discovers what it means to LIVE.

Wouldn't you like to live the life of the characters from a superb novel? YES! Well, maybe not. Haha. But I think a little bit of danger, suspense, and sorrow is better than just drudging through life, never making an impact. Never being impacted. There's more to life than novels, as lovely as they are! So I guess Alice's character really spoke to me.

There were some things I didn't like so much about *Wonderland Creek*. For one, Alice's relationship with a certain guy. It was all mushy and physical "love" and had nothing to do with real love after all. But she and her slightly strange aunt conclude that its worth it as long as you can look up at the sky and think wistfully about a lost love that was so sweet. Wow. How would your husband feel about that, I wonder? But it all ended well anyway!

So yeah, a few little things here and there that made me pause; but mostly, it was a poignant, if not crazy, tale, and I really found myself captivated... and thinking. So join Alice as she goes on the most wonderful journey of her life! A journey to reach what God had planned for her existence.

Good book! :) ...now to go live my own adventure... :P

Rebecca says

It was a fun book just the thing I wanted when I lay in a reading slump. It was all about a girl crazy about books. She reminded me of myself and that made it all the more interesting. Clean entertainment all the way .

Sonya says

"If my life were a book, no one would read it. People would say it was too boring, too predictable. A story told a million times. But I was perfectly content with my life – that is, until the pages of my story were ripped

out before I had a chance to live happily ever after.”

Austin has done it again. With Caroline from *Candle in the Darkness*, I was transported back in time, to Richmond, Virginia through the Civil War. Now, with *Wonderland Creek*, I found myself in a little town in Kentucky, during the Great Depression. It didn't take long after that opening (the quote above) for me to be engrossed in the novel.

After her boyfriend broke up with her and losing her job as a librarian, Allie, our protagonist, decided to deliver the donated books she collected to a town in Kentucky. Little did she know that she would be stuck in this backward town, find herself being involved in a mystery, do things she never imagined and perhaps experience romance.

The people from the town slowly grow, not only on Allie, but on me as well - the packhorse ladies who seemed cool at first but are actually kind; Maggie has her problems but I like how she stays in the town to take care of her mother-in-law; genuine June Ann; Lillie, a hundred-year-old lady who might sometimes force her way on Allie, but is really wise and cares about the people around her; Mack, who also cares and serves the community; and Allie, who has her flaws but has grown a lot throughout the novel. All the characters are so real that I can't help but love.

And the story. It has everything I love in a novel – adventure, mystery, murder, buried treasures, romance, a historical setting and also characters who love books! And I could see myself re-reading this in the future (that says a lot since I seldom re-read books), perhaps when I get my own copy.

I noted down a lot of quotes that I love. And I will end this review with one of them.

“If I've learned anything at all from my time away, it's that you've got to take chances in life. Jump in with both feet and do things you never dreamed of doing. We only got one life, and we've got to live it to the full. Most of all, we've got to love others to the full.”

Carly says

Oh my goodness! Are Lynn Austin's books all this good? I have never read any of her books before *Wonderland Creek* and I can't help but wonder what I have been missing out on all this time. My interest in this book started simple enough. Alice Grace is a book lover, well, that's putting it mildly. I knew Alice was a girl after my own heart on page 23: “The books were stiff and spotlessly clean, with that incomparable new-book fragrance. Is there anything like it in the whole world? I've been known to open new books and inhale the aroma like perfume.” That sounds just like me, so I knew I could relate to this character.

So, I got further into the story and found that she was spunky and quite funny. This book had me laughing so many times. I was not expecting that. Then, as the book moved along, the story kept building and it got more and more interesting. The characters in *Acorn* were, well, characters. Add in some mystery and some romance with these characters and Alice's love of books and we have a book that I adored. I had no idea I was going to like this book so much because Lynn Austin's stories have not appealed to me in the past, but I am thinking I need to reconsider that. I highly recommend *Wonderland Creek*. It is going on my 2011 favorites list for sure.

Emilee says

This book was SO MUCH FUN to read! It totally kept my interest throughout the entire book. This book is fun, adventurous, compelling and sweet. It has interesting characters and did I say adventures? I enjoyed Alice's character, I could definitely relate to her. Miss Lillie's prayers and love potions made me smile. I had read a book by Lynn Austin a couple of years ago that I didn't love and had just never pick up another by her. I decided to give this one a chance because of all the great reviews and I'm so glad I did.

Tito says

This book was absolutely adorable, and Alice (or Allie) is a heroine that I like very much simply because I could relate to her so well. Reading constantly day and night? Check. Terrified of horses? Check. Sometimes oblivious to the real world? Check. What I really loved most was her character growth because she started off whiny and entitled, but I was really impressed by how she grew up and changed for the better.

And another highlight of the book was Lillie. She's the best, and I absolutely adored her. The setting of the town was really well done, and I felt like I was really living there while Allie had her adventures. The only downside to this book was the romance. That's usually not a problem for me, but I felt like Allie's romance with Mack wasn't that fleshed out, especially since she seemed to be head over heels in love with Ike Arnett for awhile. I didn't really see any reason why Allie liked Mack. Of course I was happy when they were together but... I didn't understand why they actually liked each other.

This is the first Lynn Austin book I've successfully completed (I haven't completed *Candle in the Darkness* because I've been so busy and haven't had time to just sit and listen to it as an audiobook. Even though I really like it. Shame on me :(However this was wonderfully written and I'm looking forward to more of this author's books.

Amber Stokes says

Once upon a time a friend gave me the opportunity to visit The World's Fair in Chicago, as well as experience some quirky intrigue and sweet romance, by letting me borrow her copy of *A Proper Pursuit*. When the opportunity arrived to read *Wonderland Creek*, I dived in and discovered another great story that let me meander Kentucky trails during the Great Depression and find all sorts of crazy adventures.

Both of my experiences with Lynn Austin's work have been quite enjoyable! *Wonderland Creek* is a book that holds up a mirror and gives you a chance to examine your own book-worm lifestyle (if you're anything like the heroine and me) - but be careful! When you step through the mirror you might just discover an unusual world where you shouldn't be too quick to judge or too quick to assume you know all there is to know. Sweet surprises are in store when Alice visits Wonderland...Creek, that is!

Wonderland Creek explores the joys of life and loving as the heroine discovers that living life can be more exciting than reading about it (believe it or not!). Don't worry, though - the blessings of books are also shown throughout the story. This book doesn't shy away from some serious questions about the realities of

hardships, and yet it remains fun and unique in what seems to be traditional Austin style. Go ahead and visit Wonderland Creek - I think you'll be glad you did!

With thanks to Bethany House through CFBA for providing me with a copy of the book in exchange for my honest opinion.

Cheryl Olson says

Early on with my book reviewing I had to make a decision as to what criteria I would use with my marking system. I mean to be honest, there are so many great books out there by so many great authors that I could give everyone 5 stars and feel fine about it. But when I started to pay attention a bit more, I found that there were 2 things that really helped me pick out the 5 star books. The first was writing that truly transported me to that place created by the author that I just couldn't wait to get back to so that I could see what those characters were up to and how everything works out. The second thing was even more impactful, that Christian fiction book that has the power to hit me right where I am and speak a word of truth in my life that actually make me take a look at myself and ask God to help me change something. Lynn Austin has consistently done that in all of the books that I have read by her and Wonderland Creek is no exception.

Wonderland Creek opens with young Alice Grace Ripley, a recently hired librarian from Blue Island Illinois, being unceremoniously dumped by her year- long boyfriend Gordon. I'm afraid that Alice was expecting a ring soon, not to be "let go". And unfortunately, right after being "let go" by Gordon, she is "let go" by her job as well. This novel is set in 1936 so the library where she was working was going through tough times financially as the depression was affecting the whole country. (Sound familiar?) As a result, Alice is left wondering what to do with herself. From all of her extensive reading, Alice discovers that in the hills of Kentucky, they are in desperate need of books. She had already been heading up a book drive at her library for this need and since her aunt and uncle were heading to Kentucky, she decides to hitch a ride with them and deliver the books herself to a little town called Acorn, Kentucky. She arrives to this very rural, and rustic little town, if you blinked you would miss it, and marches right over to Leslie MacDougal's house, the resident librarian with whom she had been corresponding about the need for the books. She rashly decided to come without waiting to see if she was invited, only to discover that "Leslie MacDougal" is a "he", not a "she". She is left by her aunt and uncle in this little town for 2 weeks, but that 2 weeks gets extended as she needs to help out with various things such as being a packhorse librarian and traveling a route to the different families of Acorn (who happen to be incredibly divided over a 100 year long feud regarding buried treasure). She ends up in one scrape after another with having to learn how to exist with no electricity, learning to ride a horse, and oh yeah help with the staging of the fake death of the resident librarian Leslie MacDougal "Mac". Life is not boring in Acorn, Kentucky.

The characters in this book are a pleasure to read. Alice has a lot of growing up to do in terms of engaging in life with others, more that keeping her nose stuck in a book. As she grows and matures and learns the joy of helping others, loving others, and truly living life with those around you, you can't help but come to really love this character. Probably my favorite character is Lillie, a former slave, who really becomes a mentor to Alice, and needs to push Alice several times in her growing process, but her storyline is fascinating to read as it unfolds as well. Leslie MacDougal or "Mac" is also a lover of books as the local librarian, but has struck that right balance of reading great stories and living a great story. He is definitely a character that grows on you as well.

All I can say is it is no wonder that Lynn Austin has won 7 Christy Awards as she writes with truth, humor and a clear moral to love and engage with those that God has brought your way. I definitely recommend this

book for those that love great historical fiction.

I was graciously provided a complimentary copy of this book by Bethany House publishing in exchange for an honest review. I was not required to write a positive review.

Christy says

Alice is probably one of my favorite characters in fiction. I could almost see her making her way up the mountain delivering so much more than just books. My first and hopefully not my last Lynn Austin. I have to admit what made this one special to me was the love of books in this most interesting read.
