



The Essay: A Novel

Robin Yocum

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Jimmy Lee Hickam grew up deep in the bowels of Appalachian Ohio, on the poorest road in the poorest county in the poorest region of the state. To make things worse, the name Hickam is synonymous with trouble. Jimmy Lee hails from a mix of thieves, moonshiners, and drunkards who for decades have clung to both the hardscrabble hills and the iron bars of every jail cell in the region. This life, Jimmy Lee believes, is his destiny: working with his drunkard father at the sawmill, or sitting next to his arsonist brother in the penitentiary.

If not for an inspiring coach and Jimmy Lee's ability to play football, he would not have returned for his junior year in high school. When his visionary English teacher cuts Jimmy Lee a break, preserving his eligibility for the coming football season, he rewards her with a winning essay in the high school writing contest.

When irate parents and administration claim he has cheated, his teacher takes Jimmy Lee's writing talent as far as it can go, showing him the path out of the hills of Appalachia.

Terrific characterizations, surprising revelations, gut-wrenching past betrayals, and an unforgettable cast of characters borne of the dusty worn-out landscape of Southeastern Ohio, make *The Essay* a powerful, evocative, and incredibly moving novel.

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