

## Lech

**Sara Lippmann**

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In *Lech*, lives intersect in the mountains of New York, exposing the countless banalities and brutalities of generations.

Within pages of the book's start, a character recalls being assaulted as a child. This sets the tone for the main five characters to explore their various traumas: Ira is the aging child of Holocaust survivors, Noreen is a grifter trying to sell Ira's land to city folk, Paige is Noreen's daughter with dreams of escaping to Florida, Beth is a young mother visiting from the city and renting Ira's cabin, and Tzvi is a Hasidic Jewish drug dealer. Decades ago, a pregnant Jewish woman (Tzvi's mother) drowned in Ira's lake, and her death still overshadows the lives of those in the region.

Seeking companionship yet trapped in their own lives, each character interacts with the others, flirting, stealing, and deceiving. Their dreams, fantasies, and hallucinations are vivified in a way that sometimes obscures the boundaries between reality and what lives in the minds of the characters. Beth, for instance, is stuck in an unhappy marriage with a man whose brother died on 9/11. Her wine-fueled fears trap her in bizarre scenarios. Haunted by such tragedies, the characters move as if they, too, are ghosts, uncertain of their own motivations.

Bad sex prevails, with men seeking it and women enduring it. Two of the book's three focal women endure molestation and worse. Alcohol and drug use paint the pages with reminders of the draw to numb and escape from difficult experiences. The book ends on a cliffhanger, with illness and death hovering over more than one person, leaving their fates uncertain.

*Lech* is a bleak and brutal novel that sifts through the tragedy-stricken lives of Upstate New Yorkers.

JEANA JORGENSEN (September / October 2022)

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