

LONGACRE PRESS RESOURCE KIT

Longacre Press Young Adult Fiction

DEEP FRIED

Bernard Beckett
& Clare Knighton

'I am empty, itchy, hot; powered by Pissed Off and fuelled by made-to-last but not-to-keep ten dollar notes.'

Welcome to Pete's world.

He doesn't mean to start anything. He's not asking for a fight. Or a stalker. Or the attention of the mighty PBs. But one small act of defiance is all it takes.

As tangled as the internet that snares him, as powerful as the corporation that will have its revenge, as urgent as Sophie who will not be denied, DEEP FRIED is a sassy-sharp, adrenaline-fuelled thriller for the twenty-first century.

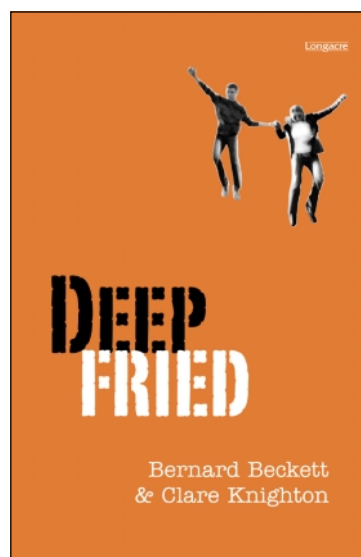
A stand-out novel featuring award-winning writer Bernard Beckett and the debut of Clare Knighton.

THE AUTHORS:

- BERNARD BECKETT is one of our most popular writers for young adults. He's recently been awarded a NZ Science, Mathematics and Technology Teacher Fellowship for 2005 where he'll be exploring DNA mutations.
- CLARE KNIGHTON is a science student at Victoria University. This is her first book.

RESOURCE KIT CONTAINS:

- Synopsis
- Writing style
- Author statement
- Editorial comment
- Study notes/Discussion points



SPECIFICATIONS:

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PO Box 5340, Dunedin, tel: 03 477 2911, fax: 03 477 7222 Email: admin@longacre.co.nz

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Private Bag 102950, North Shore Mail Centre, Auckland, tel: 09 444 7197, fax: 09 444 7524

Email: customerservice@randomhouse.co.nz

SYNOPSIS:

PETE, in his last year of high school, is hit by a giant wave of disillusion about his future. His final year is supposed to be when he has ‘made it’. Teachers, parents, advertising campaigns all tell him he’s had some of the best years of his life and now he should be ready and amped to launch off into adulthood, and the so-called real world. But when he looks at that world, it all seems like more of the same: one great big empty con. He’s disgruntled about everything from soft drink ads, to listening to music, boy-meets-girl flirtations, classes, and even his own friends.

Itchy, antsy, angry – and not really understanding exactly why – he finds himself staging a spontaneous anti-you-name-it protest at a local Prince of Burgers franchise. Which gets him on the news. Which draws the attentions of a troubled young woman at his school, who sets up a

website in his support. Which – given the instantaneous reach of the Net – starts a chain reaction of copycat protests around the world. All of which can’t escape notice of the Prince of Burgers’ management team. Soon two of its company psychologists, Lucinda and Marcus, want to interview Pete. Intrigued by his angry energy, and his angle on society, they think he might be made of the stuff that could win him a study scholarship. Has Pete’s view of corporate ethics been misguided?

Meanwhile, Sophie, his fanclub website manager, has developed an unhealthy obsession with Pete’s antics. She is following his every move – and she has her own suspicions about why Lucinda and Marcus are so fascinated by Pete. She thinks she knows the truth – but who can the reader trust?

WRITING STYLE:

from Chapter 1, pp 8–9

If there’s one place guaranteed to piss me off even more than school, it’s the mall, but I go anyway. Don’t expect reasons, never call me reasonable. I pay homage to the money machine, then cross the carpark to The Prince of Burgers – PBs to its friends – that cathedral of convenience where every day, in every dimple of the globe, the millions come to worship.

There are four queues operating and I pick the slowest one, or maybe the slowest one picks me. How can you tell? I am itching for something, scratchy all over and impossible to satisfy. I don’t even much feel like PBs. Do you ever? But I have to do something and it is lunch time and there is money in my pocket and as they say down at the Sexual Health Centre, one thing leads to another.

It is hot, the heat from the sun magnifies through the grease-smear, franchise-sanctioned windows, rippling across the heat waves of hot plates and deep-friers. UV-powered convection currents are running slap bang into the industrial blast of the food buggering factory, and the factory heat, with its added sound and smell, somehow overpowering it. Defeating even this, the nuclear fusion of the sun, so really what the hell chance do we have?

Dark stains spread about the armpits of the android uniforms behind the counter. Sweat drips off the brows and the deep-friers spit it back, free fertiliser for the pimples of the underpaid slave.

I am empty, itchy, hot; powered by Pissed Off and fuelled by made-to-last but-not-to-keep ten dollar notes.

AUTHOR STATEMENT from Bernard Beckett:



What motivated you to write the book?

BB: For me it's more a matter of needing motivation not to write books, you know? I had written and directed a play at the school where I teach – and this involved a guy being kidnapped, and an obsessive stalker following him out to the cave where he was being held. I was basically playing round with that idea. I was wanting to write a little differently, so was looking round for someone to write the book with. Clare had the role of the stalker in the play, so I thought I'd see if she'd be up for recapturing that voice.

Can you give us any other background information – such as research you undertook, the origins of the ideas?

BB: In the play, the kidnappers were fundamentalist Christians I think, but you can only flog a particular horse so long, so I turned my attention to the fast food industry. I was interested in creating a very particular voice for Pete: disaffected, cynical, observant, modern. Not sure if I managed.

Were there any problems or difficulties you encountered along the way?

BB: You know, plot development, endings, characterisation, phrasing, consistency... just the usual story of head down and into it.



EDITORIAL COMMENT:

THIS NOVEL fuses social satire, and a dark kind of 'stand-up' comedy voice with the plot elements of a thriller. The main narrators are sardonic and mordant at once. Sophie is smart, brooding, and more than a little off-beam. Pete may be cynical, yet not even his own motivations are immune to his grumbling wit. A fast and furious novel that energises young readers for a number of intellectual debates.

STUDY NOTES/DISCUSSION POINTS:

- Should big corporations need to conform to ethical guidelines? If so, how could these be effectively policed? What do you think some of these guidelines could be?
- What are the ethical dilemmas behind places like schools accepting corporate sponsorship?
- How do new technologies change our ideas of privacy, intimacy, identity and even morality?
- Discuss Pete's and Sophie's mental states. What is meant by *The Sadness*? What's the difference between being depressed and just being a little down? How is it related to *Pissed Off*? Are these just Pete's afflictions, or does Sophie share them in any way?
- Sophie is obviously breaking the law in her more extreme stalking activities. Are we sympathetic towards her? Why are her actions okay/not okay?
- Marcus and Lucinda attempt to break down Pete's and Sophie's psychological defenses. How easy would it be to brainwash someone, if you had the resources?
- What motivates us to comply to, or rebel against, accepted social norms?
- What is the relationship between 'courting' or flirting with someone, and stalking? Following class discussion, research the legal definition of stalking.
- Do you understand Pete's cynicism about modern society? Does he go too far, or not far enough? Is he a hypocrite? Are we all hypocrites?
- What literary or structural elements of a thriller does the novel show? How do these differ and/or mirror the literary elements of psychological drama?
- How do the two main narrator's voices – and/or the two authors' writing styles – differ?
- If you have read other novels by Bernard Beckett, compare the writing styles of *Deep Fried* and his other work. Is there an artistic signature you can recognise?