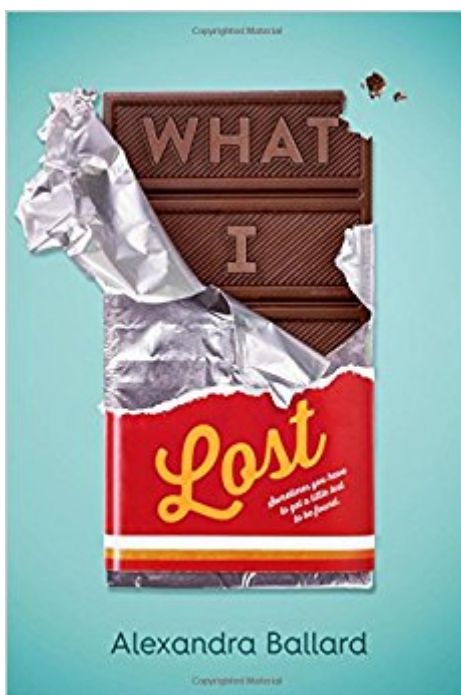


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# What I Lost



## Synopsis

What sixteen-year-old Elizabeth has lost so far: forty pounds, four jean sizes, a boyfriend, and her peace of mind. As a result, she's finally a size zero. She's also the newest resident at Wallingfield, a treatment center for girls like her—girls with eating disorders. Elizabeth is determined to endure the program so she can go back home, where she plans to start restricting her food intake again. She's pretty sure her mom, who has her own size-zero obsession, needs treatment as much as she does. Maybe even more. Then Elizabeth begins receiving mysterious packages. Are they from her ex-boyfriend, a secret admirer, or someone playing a cruel trick? This eloquent debut novel rings with authenticity as it follows Elizabeth's journey to taking an active role in her recovery, hoping to get back all that she lost.

## Book Information

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Shipping Weight: 1 pounds (View shipping rates and policies)

Average Customer Review: 4.8 out of 5 stars 24 customer reviews

Best Sellers Rank: #64,400 in Books (See Top 100 in Books) #46 in Books > Teens >

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## Customer Reviews

"Vivid descriptions of the panic and visceral disgust she experiences at the prospect of eating juxtapose well with the account of her progress as she begins to confront just how profound the effect her mother's disordered relationship with food and body image has had on her...Readers will root for the novel's likable main character and gain some understanding of the complexity of her illness at the same time." —Kirkus  
"Through Elizabeth's painful uphill battle, newcomer Ballard skillfully illustrates that although unhealthy eating habits may start as a choice, an eating disorder is a complicated illness that cannot be battled without support and vigilance."

“Publishers Weekly” This debut novel offers readers an authentic and in-depth look at eating disorders... Elizabeth is a sympathetic narrator, relatable even in the midst of her turmoil... The book doesn’t sugarcoat and portrays with steady clarity and empathy the characters’ struggles. VERDICT Filled with honesty, heart, and unexpected humor, this story is sure to please a multitude of readers.” School Library Journal

Alexandra Ballard has worked as a magazine editor, middle-school English teacher, freelance writer, and cake maker. She holds master’s from both Columbia (journalism) and Fordham (education) and spent ten years in the classroom, beginning in the Bronx and ending up in the hills of Berkeley, California, with her husband and two daughters. *What I Lost* is Alexandra Ballard’s debut novel.

GRADE: Elizabeth’s involuntary stay in an eating disorder residential facility begins with typical resistance. As she befriends other patients, she begins to take steps toward recovery. She continues to receive gifts from a secret admirer who may or may not be her ex. Unlike most eating disorder books, *WHAT I LOST* delves more deeply into Elizabeth’s mother’s undiagnosed eating disorder. Alexandra Ballard does a good job balancing friendship, therapy and family dynamics. Her writing style flows unobtrusively without my needing to stop and shake my head at poor wording. No sentences were that well-written that I paused to reread because of their beauty. Ballard’s major and minor characters had depth and unique backstories, some interesting enough for their own novels. Elizabeth’s linear recovery was somewhat unrealistic, most patients have many more ups and downs, often progressing two steps forward to take a step back. Her 40 day stay in the program was also out of reach for all but wealthy families. The program didn’t have anyone leave because insurance ran out due to the abundance of scholarships. If only this were true in real life. While *WHAT I LOST* is predictable, I still recommend this optimistic story as better than most books on eating disorders.

*What I Lost* is a compelling and articulately written novel on the struggles of a young woman with anorexia. In a style that is equal parts raw and heartwarming, author Alexandra Ballard captures the character of Elizabeth in both the normalcy of her adolescent reality and the pain of her psychiatric struggle with anorexia. I appreciated the way in which she was able to captivate the reader with a topic that is intensely painful and personal as well as how she was able to capture the complexity of the disease. I found myself thirsting to read more about Elizabeth’s life after the book ended.

I have a weakness for YA literature. So I'm obviously excited to have found a new author contributing well written, realistic stories to the genre! I was totally sucked into Elizabeth's struggle. I thought the depiction of group therapy was really powerful. Highly recommend!

Beautifully written, told with humor and heart. I loved this story and its deeply honest and authentic characters and never wanted to put it down. An excellent read not only for older teens and young adults, but for grownups, too. It never speaks down, or becomes pedantic, but teaches us so much. Can't wait to read more from this debut author!

Once I started, couldn't put this down. Laughed, hoped, winced, and definitely cried, but also learned. An important book for anyone with eating disorders in their life - whether a friend, a family member, or yourself, this is an accurate window into a very misunderstood disease.

This was an engaging story. I didn't expect to sympathize so strongly with a girl struggling with anorexia. It was told with a good balance of humor and seriousness.

A wonderful easy read about a very difficult subject. I found the characters engaging and the plot engaging. In fact, I raced through the book wanting to get to the end. I work with young adults and highly recommend this book.

I've read this excellent book twice. It's well written, thoughtful, engaging and gives great insights into the issues faced by young people struggling with eating disorders. The dialog is well written - and there's even a mystery!

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