



Finding What's Lost

Gail L. Winfree

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It's 1972 and 24-year-old Adrian Berger's life is about to change. An only child with well-to-do parents, Adrian has everything except friends. His sheltered childhood has crippled him emotionally and sexually and has made him a selfish, arrogant loner. He has no regrets about it until he is faced with a tragedy that sends him on a journey to unlock a family secret and reveal the lies of his life. Along the way, Adrian discovers love, explores loss, finds a hidden identity, and faces difficulties he's not prepared to meet. He experiences the joys of Zen, naked women, and BBK beer. He finds God the hard way. He learns about love and sex the hard way. He learns to make friends the hard way. He learns life the hard way, finding reality a difficult concept to grasp at times.

This journey takes Adrian to Kaiserslautern, Germany, where he must find the two people who can help him put the pieces of his puzzled life together and unravel the lies he has lived. And all he has are names: Joseph and Katherina Iwanovitz.

Finding What's Lost Details

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From Reader Review Finding What's Lost for online ebook

Esther Handelman says

Boring book, poorly written.

Stewart McFarlane says

Beautiful "Coming of Age" novel. Deceptively simple writing style, by an author owing a certain debt to Hemingway. I really enjoyed it. The author draws you into the main character, Adrian Berger, who has to deal with some terrible losses at a young age; all related with compassion and sensitivity. It also evokes a past age of recent history: post Vietnam War America, and West Germany, with US presence still very evident. I warmed to Adrian, and another surprise in the narrative is the appearance of the author himself as a guide and mentor to the young writer. The themes of death and loss are central to this novel. The author weaves the losses in Vietnam, with early deaths of Rock stars of the period, such as Hendrix & Joplin, with the loss of those close the main character. A moving and engaging book.

Michael says

History and/or Sex

I was very excited to find a book located in Kaiserslautern, a town of which I expect most readers have never heard. Oddly enough, I found the first part, before Adrian went overseas, the more interesting. My brother sang opera there for several years, and I would visit him nearly every summer. I had hoped that Kaiserslautern would have played a greater part in the narrative, but alas, it did not, except for naked women on porches folding clothes, couch scenes, bedroom scenes and the like. The tale could have been located in Amsterdam or Antarctica, for all the Real Kaiserslautern mattered. This struck me as a shame, because had K-Town played a more central role, more readers might be tempted to visit it.

Anne says

A young man loses his parents, then searches for his roots in the post WWII era in Germany. He arrives in Kaiserslautern and begins his journey in search of himself and his biological parents. Along the way he finds what was lost.

Having lived in the military community in Germany in the early 1980s, and here again for the past three years, I felt a connection to the young man as he struggled to learn the language and culture, and ultimately found the connections he hoped he would find. This book is a must read for those American soldiers and their families who have been stationed in Europe.

Matt says

In this first-person narrative Adrian Berger, a 24 year old American, tells about the big L's: Life, Love, Lust and Loss.

His journey begins in America, where he attended college, and leads him in the second part of the book to Germany, specifically to Kaiserslautern (aka K-Town). The chapters are interrupted by sections called "interlude", which represent some kind of diary, and lead out of the context of linear story.

The whole book I think is worth reading. Although written in a rather simple language, it's good literature, especially for a debut novel.

Two things I would like to highlight:

German terms from the Alltagswelt are incorporated into the text here and there, whenever the narrator feels it fits. As a German native speaker I hardly notice and it doesn't interfere with my flow of reading. I would imagine though that people without knowledge of German may feel differently.

Second, some sex scenes are described quite explicitly, but in no way pornographic whatsoever.

I really enjoyed this book, and I hope you will too.

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Brittany says

I won this book for free from the Goodread's First Reads giveaway.

"Finding What's Lost" was overall a good book. It takes place in 1972 in America. A 24 year old man named Adrian Berger just loses his parents to an accident. He finds out afterwards that he was adopted; he then searches for his family's roots in Kaiserslautern Germany (where the second half of the book takes place).

The author has a different writing style than the usual. I must say I kind of enjoyed it. Each paragraph was spaced which made for easier reading. I also liked how he wasn't very descriptive on unimportant scenery or other facts. His writing was "to the point"; it did not drag on. Some problems I did find were many spelling mistakes. For example; the word quiet was always spelt as quite, the word trivial was spelt trivia, the word lose was spelt loose, etc. There were also a few grammar errors. This did not take away from the unique writing style though.

My favourite quote from the book is on page 21. This is when Adrian finds out his birth name was Nicholas and his thoughts to himself were interesting, "Nicholas Iwanovitz, you came before me. Adrian Berger was never born. He was created and formed into something he is not".

My rating would be around 3.75/5 which rounds up to 4. Overall, it is a very good book. I believe in general men will appreciate it slightly more than women. I am very happy that I won this unique book!

Fred Forbes says

I feel a bit like the young boy sent off to his first school dance with an admonition from his mother to say something nice to anyone he interacted with. Took a bit of thinking but as he was dancing with a classmate he came up with "Wow, you don't sweat much for a fat girl!" This book puts me in mind of that situation so I guess my good comment would be - "At least it is short!". And while I have published a few dozen articles in magazines on photography, sailing and business I have not written a book, self published or otherwise so Gail, as my Australian friend would say, "Good on ya, mate!"

Now that his friends and family and free book winners (and the author himself with 5 stars) have weighed in with their 4 and 5 star I have to rain on the parade with the 2 star award. The book is trite, simplistic, fragmented, and extremely unrealistic. No one ever says anything to the kid except how wonderful he is, how much money he is inheriting, how much they love him, etc. He is always encountering naked women, he shows up in Germany with the express mission to find his birth parents then stays in a boarding house for months (to "suffer" so that his writing will improve).

The chapters are short, the paragraphs are short and the sentences are short. Digressions pop up to no purpose, a la the French soldiers that got a comment and it gets repetitive in places. Dialogue is stilted and sappy. Pretty choppy all the way through but the biggest distraction is the number of words that made it past the spell checker but that an editor would catch. For example, "quite vs. quiet", "past vs. passed", "lose vs. loose", "no vs. know", "normal vs. normally". "chocking vs choking".

I have now read 5 self published novels. One, "Wool" I read after finding an article in the Wall St. Journal about what a hit it is, was quite good. A second book, a novel on the Kennedy assassination, done by a business friend, was good since he had it professionally edited before he had it printed. The next three, like this one, were badly in need of editorial help and were a real chore to read but I made it through. I think this just makes me realize that one function that publishers play is that of a filter to help separate those works with potential and a big tip of the hat to the editors who polish the rough edges. Still, I know it is a difficult task for a writer to break through with an agent and an established publisher and very few make it so I guess the addendum at the end about the character becoming a best selling author is a bit of wishful thinking.

Lilo says

Gail Winfree is a true literary talent. I wouldn't be surprised to see him getting nominated for a high literary award at some time. His books are definitely not "run of the mill". I already noticed this when I read "Things I Remember", where Gail Winfree proves himself as a deep thinker, one could even say a philosopher; mind you a daring philosopher who recklessly defies conventions. Now, "Finding What's Lost" is a novel, not a poetry book that reminisces in philosophical thoughts, but here, too, Gail Winfree keeps surprising the reader with unusual thoughts, and there are many passages that give evidence of -- sometimes startling -- philosophical insights.

Why did I not give this book 5 stars? There were exactly three reasons: (1) I found the preface unnecessary and a spoiler. No need to feed the reader with a synopsis of the book. Besides, I consider the author too critical of his protagonist, whom I neither found arrogant nor selfish, only somewhat immature as quite

natural for his age. (2) I could have done without the very last chapter, for the second-last chapter would, in my opinion, have made a perfect ending. (3) I don't care for it when fiction is written in the first person, but that's just my personal dislike.

All in all, I strongly recommend this book. I recommend it especially to readers who are appreciative of literary value.

One caveat: The book contains rather graphic descriptions of erotic scenes (so it may not be the right read for people who are a bit prudish); yet this happens mainly because the protagonist, who the author assured me is not autobiographic, has the bad luck to keep running into beautiful, naked women.

Susan says

This book was won thru Good Reads give-away. The first chapter

Paddy O'callaghan says

Loved Sex Beer and Naked Women. Great book. Believable protagonist, and very beautifully written.

Zushka Biros says

What can I say about a book that I loved, besides "I loved it!"

Finding What's Lost, by Gail L. Winfree, is a story about a young American man in Germany, on a quest to find his birth parents. Along the way, Adrian, the main character, finds a life for himself. He falls in love, more than once. I cried when the character, Hanna, passed away. Half-way through the book, I found myself not being able to put it down. I felt what the characters were feeling. Mr. Winfree's attention to detail in descriptive writing made me feel like I was a part of the scenes in the book – in the cities, in the countryside, and even in the car during the road trips. I found myself rooting for Adrian, wanting him to get the job, wanting him to fall in love with Alice, wanting him to find his parents. I loved Adrian's lifestyle – where he chose to live, his modestness, gentleness, and his humbleness. The dialogue between the characters was realistic, and I found myself wanting to join in the conversations with them. The characters were well thought out, each one of their personalities jumped from the pages. I found myself being able to relate in many ways to quite a few of the characters' attributes. That may have been Mr. Winfree's greatest gift – allowing the reader to identify with the characters in the story – after all, everyone has a story to tell. Mr. Winfree's writing-style is unique, simplistic, "real life," and easy to follow. The ending was not what I expected – better than I could have imagined. This is a story that is well worth the read, and now that I have finished it, I will read it again! Much gratitude, Mr. Winfree, for a book well written! I will definitely be reading your other books, "Things I Remember," "The Reality of Being Lovers," and all of your future books to come. Thank you!
