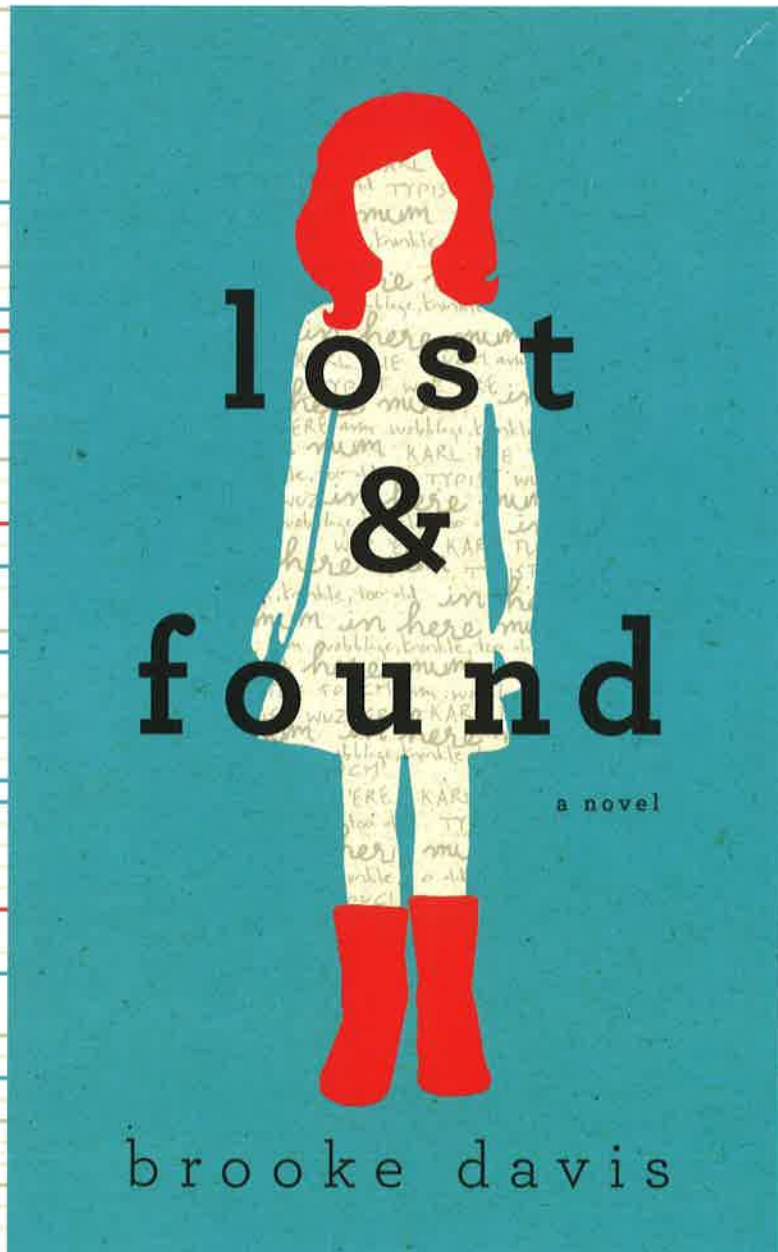


INGRAM®

ADVANCE

FEBRUARY 2015



▶ **Lost & Found**

An irresistible debut novel about the wisdom of the very young, the mischief of the very old, and the magic that happens when no one else is looking.

BROOKE DAVIS

LOST & FOUND

AN INTRIGUING EXPLORATION OF LOSS & GRIEF

photograph by Ailsa Bowyer



Inspired by the sudden death of her mother, Brooke Davis wrote her debut novel *Lost & Found* as her thesis on grief for her Ph.D. A sensation that sparked a bidding war among publishers at the 2014 London Book Fair, the book explores what it means to grieve through the story of a seven-year-old girl and two octogenarians, each of whom has suffered devastating loss.

Millie's dog, Rambo, was her Very First Dead Thing. She found him by the side of the road on a morning when the sky seemed to be falling, fog circling his broken shape like a ghost. His jaw and eyes were wide open, as if mid-bark. His left hind leg pointed in a direction it normally didn't. The fog lifted around them, the clouds gathered in the sky, and she wondered if he was turning into rain. It was only when she dragged Rambo up to the house in her schoolbag that her mother thought to tell her how the world worked.

He's gone to a better place, her mother shouted at her while vacuuming the lounge room.

A better place?

What? Yes, heaven, love, haven't you heard of it? Don't they teach you anything in that bloody school? Lift your legs! It's doggy heaven, where there's eternal dog biscuits and they can poop wherever they please. Okay, legs down. I said, legs down! And they poop, I don't know, dog biscuits, so all they do is poop and eat dog biscuits, and run around and eat the other dogs' poop. Which are actually dog biscuits.

Millie took a moment. Why would they waste time here, then?

What? Well, they, um, have to earn it. They have to stay here until they get voted over to a better place. Like doggy Survivor.

So, is Rambo on another planet?

Well, yes. Sort of. I mean—you really haven't heard of heaven? How God sits up in the clouds and Satan's all underground and everything?

Can I get to Rambo's new planet?

Her mother switched off the vacuum cleaner and looked squarely at Millie. Only if you have a spaceship. Do you have a spaceship?

Millie looked at her feet. No.

Well, you can't get to Rambo's new planet then.

Days later, Millie discovered that Rambo was most definitely not on a new planet and was, in fact, in their backyard, buried halfheartedly under the *Sunday Times*. Millie carefully lifted the newspaper and saw Rambo but not-Rambo; a Rambo shrunken and eaten and wasting away. She snuck out every night from then on, to be with him while his body went from something into nothing.

The old man crossing the road had been her Second Dead Thing. After the car hit him, she watched him fly through the air and thought she saw him smile. His hat landed on top of the yield sign and his walking stick danced around the lamp-post. And then it had been his body, cracking against the curb. She pushed her way through all the legs and exclamation marks to kneel beside his face. She looked deeply into his eyes. He looked back at her like he was only a drawing. She ran her fingers over his wrinkles and wondered what he'd used each one for.

She was then lifted away from him and told to cover her eyes, because she was just a child. And as she wandered home the long way, she thought it might be time to ask her dad about people heaven.

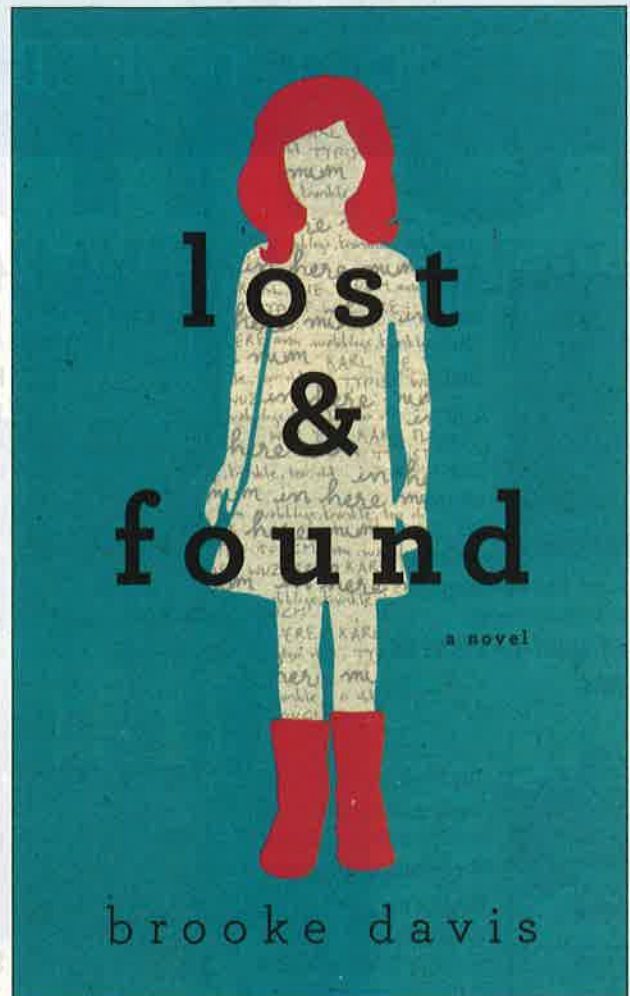
You see, Squirt, there's heaven, and then there's hell. Hell is where they send all the bad people, like criminals and con artists and parking inspectors. And heaven is where they send all the good people, like you and me and that nice blonde from Master-Chef.

What happens when you get there?

In heaven, you hang out with God and Jimi Hendrix, and you get to eat doughnuts whenever you want. In hell, you have to, uh . . . do the Macarena. Forever. To that "Grease Megamix."

Where do you go if you're good and bad?

What? I don't know. IKEA?



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Will you help me make a spaceship?

Hang on, Squirt. Can we finish this next ad break?

She soon noticed that everything was dying around her. Bugs and oranges and Christmas trees and houses and mailboxes and train rides and markers and candles and old people and young people and people in between. She wasn't to know that after she had recorded twenty-seven assorted creatures in her *Book Of Dead Things*—Spider, The Bird, Grandma, next door's cat Gertrude, among others—her dad would be a Dead Thing too. That she'd write it next to the number twenty-eight in letters so big they took up two pages: *MY DAD*. That, for a while, it was hard to know what to do other than stare at the letters until she couldn't remember what they meant. That she would do this, by flashlight, sitting in the hallway outside her parents' bedroom, listening to her mum pretending she was asleep.

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