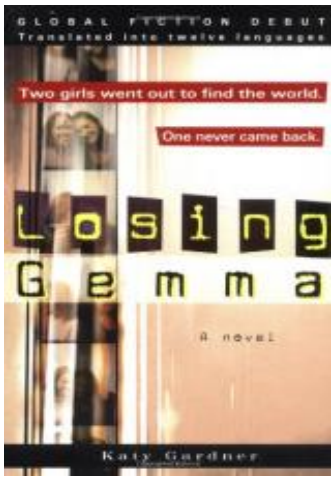
Losing Gemma

by Katy Gardner



About the Book

This is the story of Gemma and me: how I lost her, I suppose. I don't usually tell it to anyone but myself; I save it for the darkest moments.

Losing Gemma is one of the hottest fiction debuts of the summer. A first novel being compared to Alex Garland's breakthrough novel, The Beach?except the backpacking heroes are girls. And it's already being translated into nine languages.

What makes **Losing Gemma** truly unforgettable, however, is the read itself; it's as gripping and suspenseful as it is psychologically rich. Two young women have gone looking for adventure, backpacking through India?but only one returns. The other one believes it's all her fault. And the mystery behind what really happened during their fateful visit to a secluded shrine compels the reader forward to a page-turning conclusion that's shocking, strange, and haunting.

Discussion Guide

1. Part of the allure of travel is the change in perspective that it offers. In what way did this effect Gemma and Esther? Discuss how each of them reacted to the stresses and delights of the chaotic culture they confronted.

2. Some people enjoy travel?especially to places as far-flung as India?because it represents freedom from responsibilities and the ordinary. Discuss the negative implications of this for Gemma and Esther.

3. This novel effectively offers us two versions of the same story. If neither version is wrong, what does that tell us about Esther and Gemma's relationship? And how far do you think this is true of our relationships with those we are closest?

4. Esther derides the backpacking culture she observes around her, but in many ways, she is a perfect example of what

she mocks. How does her insistence on the trip to the shrine reflect that?

5. Esther is very controlling, despite her desire to be a free spirit in India. So, why do you think she takes such a long time to listen to her instincts?

6. Do you believe that Gemma was always the one who was really stronger and in control? How would you explain her attraction to Zak and his group?

7. Do you believe Gemma was pushed into becoming a detached and controlling person as a result of all those years feeling like she was the ugly duckling? Or do you think she used her role as the weaker, less outgoing sidekick to disarm others and manipulate situations to her advantage?

8. Discuss the ugly competitiveness that thrived between these so-called best friends. What were the clearest demonstrations of this dynamic?

9. In what way does Gemma really achieve the ultimate revenge on Esther? Did she mean to?

10. Do you think that Gemma and Esther's real mistake was in failing to recognize that they had long ago outgrown each other? Did they allow affection and nostalgia to obscure this fact or did the point of their friendship become the competition?

Author Bio

Katy Gardner is a graduate of Cambridge University, and received a Ph.D. from The London School of Economics. She is currently a senior lecturer in Social Anthropology at the University of Sussex. **Losing Gemma** is her first novel.

Critical Praise

"Gardner spins a strong, atmospheric story...Her rendition of Gemma and Esther's friendship will reverberate with many young female readers who might appreciate a more relationship-centered spin on the backpackers-gone-astray trope of Alex Garland's The Beach. A tragic thriller about curdled friendships and the dangerous thrills of the unknown..."

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