



Dear Reader,

I am so pleased that Lost has found its way to you. I can't wait for you to read it, but first I want to share some details about how I came to write the book and why it means so much to me, because my inspiration came from a thirteen year old boy. A boy I worked with four years ago, who had recently lost his mum to cancer. His father thought that getting his son back to school would be best for him – he wanted to restore normality and structure back into his son's life. But at the same time he struggled to deal with his son's grief along with his own. It was all too difficult.

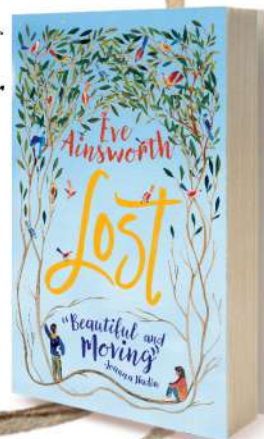
My job at the time was in a large secondary school, where I was a Pastoral Support Officer. This young boy was assigned to me; he would come to my office every morning and I would check that he was OK. Except, how could he really ever be OK? His mother was dead and his dad had built up a wall between them. This boy felt alone. He was like a shadow drifting from class to class. He would sit in my office, rest his head on his arms and stare into space. I would sit next to him and try to talk to him, but mostly he was silent. Sometimes he would tell me he was fine, but I knew he was lying.

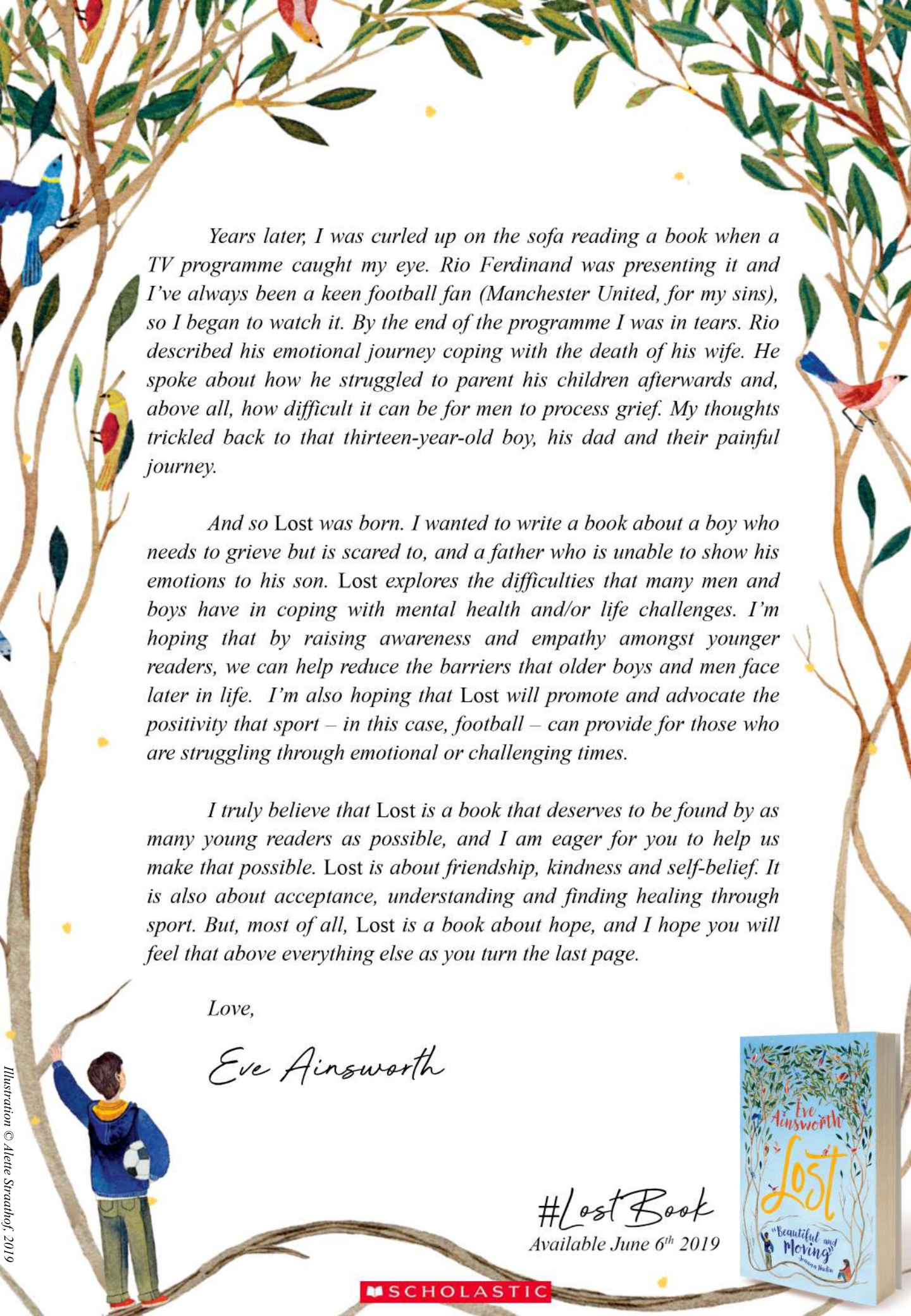
Thankfully, his story had a happy ending. He was referred to a wonderful charity for children and their bereaved parents. I remember seeing the boy and his father at the end of a meeting, sitting close together, both with tears in their eyes. They had talked. They had listened to each other. It had been a long, tough process, but they were beginning to open up.

I still think of that boy. His hunched shoulders, his haunted eyes and his face as he tried desperately hard not to cry in front of us. I remember how other pupils would avoid him, and I remember remembering being aware of how desperately hard it was for boys and their dads to grieve.

#LostBook

Available June 6th 2019





Years later, I was curled up on the sofa reading a book when a TV programme caught my eye. Rio Ferdinand was presenting it and I've always been a keen football fan (Manchester United, for my sins), so I began to watch it. By the end of the programme I was in tears. Rio described his emotional journey coping with the death of his wife. He spoke about how he struggled to parent his children afterwards and, above all, how difficult it can be for men to process grief. My thoughts trickled back to that thirteen-year-old boy, his dad and their painful journey.

And so Lost was born. I wanted to write a book about a boy who needs to grieve but is scared to, and a father who is unable to show his emotions to his son. Lost explores the difficulties that many men and boys have in coping with mental health and/or life challenges. I'm hoping that by raising awareness and empathy amongst younger readers, we can help reduce the barriers that older boys and men face later in life. I'm also hoping that Lost will promote and advocate the positivity that sport – in this case, football – can provide for those who are struggling through emotional or challenging times.

I truly believe that Lost is a book that deserves to be found by as many young readers as possible, and I am eager for you to help us make that possible. Lost is about friendship, kindness and self-belief. It is also about acceptance, understanding and finding healing through sport. But, most of all, Lost is a book about hope, and I hope you will feel that above everything else as you turn the last page.

Love,

Eve Ainsworth

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