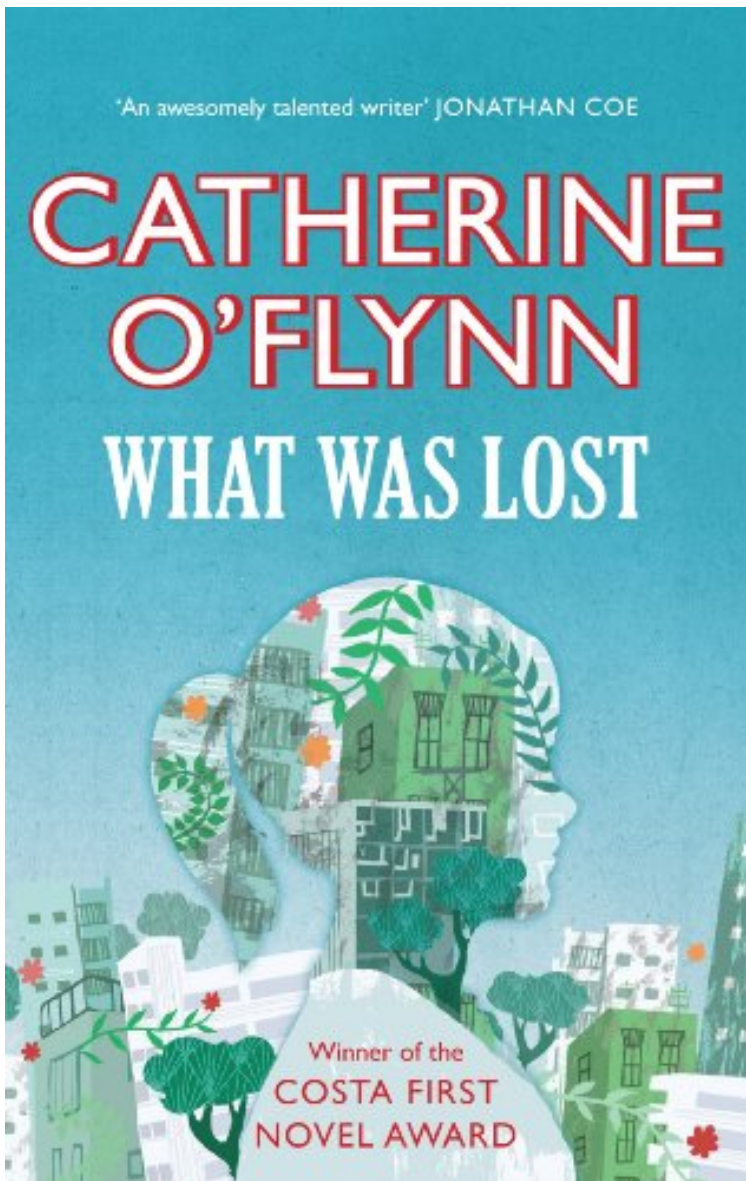


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# What Was Lost



*Par Catherine O'Flynn*  
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## Description :

Prsentation de l'diteurThe 1980s: Ten-year-old Kate Meaney - with her 'Top Secret' notebook and Mickey her toy monkey - is busy being a junior detective. She observes goings-on and follows 'suspects' at the newly opened Green Oaks shopping centre and in her street, where she is friends with the newsagent's son, Adrian.

But when this curious, independent-spirited young girl disappears, Adrian falls under suspicion and is hounded out of his home by the press. Then, in 2004, Lisa is working as a deputy manager at Your Music, a cut-price record store. Every day, under the watchful eye of the CCTV, she tears her hair out at the behaviour of her customers and colleagues. But when she meets security guard Kurt, she becomes entranced

by the little girl he keeps glimpsing on the centre's CCTV. As their after-hours friendship intensifies, they investigate how these sightings might be connected to the unsettling history of Green Oaks. Extrait 1984 Falcon Investigations | Crime was out there. Undetected, unseen. She hoped she wouldn't be too late. The bus driver was keeping the bus at a steady 15 m.p.h., braking at every approaching green light until it turned red. She closed her eyes and continued the journey in her head as slowly as she could. She opened them, but still the bus lagged far behind her worst projection. Pedestrians overtook them, the driver whistled. She looked at the other passengers and tried to deduce their activities for the day. Most were pensioners and she counted four instances of the same huge, blue checked shopping bag. She made a note of the occurrence in her pad; she knew better than to believe in coincidences. She read the adverts on the bus. Most were adverts for adverts: If you're reading this, then so could your customers. She wondered if any of the passengers ever took out advertising space on the bus, and what they would advertise if they did. Come and enjoy my big, blue, checked shopping bag, it is filled with catfood. I will talk to anyone about anything. I also eat biscuits. Mr and Mrs Roberts, officially recognized brewers of the world's strongest tea. We squeeze the bag. I smell strange, but not unpleasantly. Kate thought she would like to take out an advert for the agency. The image would be a silhouette of her and Mickey within the lens of a magnifying glass. Below, it would say: Falcon Investigations | Clues found. Suspects trailed. Crimes detected. Visit our office equipped with the latest surveillance equipment. She made another note in her pad of the phone number on the advert, to be rung at some later date when the office was fully operational. Eventually the bus reached the landscaped lawns and forlorn, fluttering flags of the light industrial estates that surrounded the newly opened Green Oaks Shopping Centre. She paid particular attention to unit 15 on the Langsdale Estate, where she had once witnessed what seemed to be an argument between two men. One man had a large moustache, the other wore sunglasses and no jacket on what had been a cold day she thought they both looked of criminal character. After some deliberation and subsequent sightings of a large white van outside the unit, she had come to the conclusion that the two men were trafficking diamonds. Today all was quiet at the unit. She opened her pad at a page with Unit 15 Surveillance written at the top. Next to that day's date she wrote in the slightly jerky bus writing that dominated the page: No sighting. Collecting another shipment from Holland? Fifteen minutes later Kate was walking through the processed air of the Market Place of Green Oaks. Market Place wasn't a market place. It was the subterranean part of the shopping centre, next to the bus terminals, reserved for the non-prestige, low-end stores: fancy goods stores, cheap chemists, fake perfume sellers, stinking butchers, flammable-clothes vendors. Their smells mingled with the smell of burnt dust from the over-door heaters and made her feel sick. This was as far as most of Kate's fellow passengers ventured into the centre. It was the closest approximation of the tatty old High Street, which had suffered a rapid decline since the centre had opened. Now when the bus drove up the High Street no one liked to look at the reproachful boarded up doorways filled with fast-food debris and leaves. She realized that it was Wednesday and that she'd forgotten to buy that week's copy of the Beano from her usual newsagent. She had no choice but to go to the dingy kiosk in the centre to get it. Afterwards she stood and looked again at the True Detective magazines on the shelf. The woman on the front didn't look like a detective. She was wearing a trilby and raincoat . . . but nothing else. She looked like someone from a Two Ronnies sketch. Kate didn't like it. She rode the escalator up to the ground floor, where the proper shops, the fountains and plastic palms began. It was the school holidays, but too early to be busy. None of her classmates was allowed to go to the centre without their parents. Sometimes she'd bump into a family group with one of her peers in tow and would exchange awkward greetings. She had picked up a sense that adults tended to be uncomfortable with her solo trips out and about, so now whenever questioned by shop assistant, security guard or parent she would always imply that an unspecified adult relative was just off in another store. Largely, though, no one questioned her, in fact no one ever really seemed to see her at all. Sometimes Kate thought she was invisible. It was 9.30 a.m. She retrieved her laboriously typewritten agenda from her back pocket: 09.30 10.45 Tandy: research walkie talkies and microphones 10.45 12.00 general centre surveillance 12.00 12.45 lunch at Vanezis 12.45 13.30 Midland Educational: look at ink pads for fingerprinting 13.30 15.30 surveillance by banks 15.30 bus home Kate hurried on to Tandy. She was flustered to arrive at Vanezis restaurant a good twenty minutes past noon. This was not the way a professional operated. This was sloppy. She waited by the door to be seated, though she could see her table was still free. The same lady as usual took her to the same table as usual and Kate slid into the orange plastic booth which offered a view out over the main atrium of the centre. Do you need to see the menu today? asked the waitress. No thanks. Can I have the Childrens Special please with a banana float? And can I not have any cucumber on the beefburger, please? Its not

cucumber, its gherkin, love. Kate made a note of this in her pad: Gherkins/cucumbers not same thing: research difference. She had to blow her cover on a Stateside mission with a stupid error like that. Kate looked at the big plastic tomato-shaped tomato-sauce dispenser on her table. They were one of her favourite things they made total sense. At school last term, Paul Roberts had read out his essay, The best birthday ever, which culminated in his grandparents and parents taking him out to Vanezis for dinner. He spoke of eating spaghetti with meatballs, which for some reason he and everyone else in the class had found funny. He was still excited as he rushed through his story of drinking ice-cream floats and ordering a Knickerbocker Glory. He said it was brilliant. Kate couldn't understand why he didn't just take himself there on a Saturday lunchtime if he liked it so much. She could even take him the first time and tell him the best place to sit. She could show him the little panel on the wall that you could slide back to reveal all the dirty plates passing by on a conveyor belt. She could tell him how one day she hoped to place some kind of auto-shutter action camera on the belt, which could travel around the entire restaurant taking surveillance shots unseen, before returning to Kate. She could point out the washing-up man who she thought might be murderous, and perhaps Paul could help her stake him out. She could maybe invite him to join the agency (if Mickey approved). But she didn't say anything. She just wondered. She glanced around to check that no one could see, then she reached into her bag and pulled out Mickey. She sat him next to her by the window, so that the waitress wouldn't notice, and where he had a good view of the people below. She was training Mickey up to be her partner in the agency. Generally Mickey just did surveillance work. He was small enough to be unobtrusive despite his rather outlandish get-up. Kate liked Mickey's outfit even though it meant he didn't blend in as well as he might. He wore a pin-striped gangster suit with spats. The spats slightly spoiled the Sam Spade effect, but Kate liked them anyway; in fact she wanted a pair herself. Mickey had been made from a craft kit called Sew your own Charlie Chimp the Gangster given to Kate by an auntie. Charlie had languished along with all of Kate's other soft toys throughout most of her childhood, but when she started up the detective agency last year she thought he looked the part. Charlie Chimp was no good though. Instead he became Mickey the Monkey. Kate would run through their agenda with him each morning and he always travelled with her in the canvas army surplus bag. The waitress brought the order. Kate ate the burger and perused the first Beano of the new year, while Mickey kept a steady eye on some suspicious teenagers below. Kate lived a bus journey away from Green Oaks. Her home was in the only Victorian block of houses left in the area, a red-brick three-storey outcrop which looked uncomfortable amidst the grey and white council-built cuboids. Kate's house was sandwiched between a newsagent's shop on one side, and a butcher and greengrocer on the other. Her house had clearly also been a shop once, but now a net curtain hung across the front window and what had been the shop was a sitting room where Kate's grandmother spent her long afternoons watching quiz shows. The house was the only one in the block not to function as a business (aside from Kate's putative agency operation), and it was also the only one used as a home. None of her shopkeeper neighbours lived above their shops; at around six o'clock each evening they would shut up and depart for their semis in the suburbs, leaving silence and emptiness on all sides of Kate's room. Kate knew and liked the shopkeepers well. The greengrocer's was run by... From Publishers Weekly Starred . Stirring and beautifully crafted, this debut novel recounts how the repercussions of a girl's disappearance can last for decades. In 1984, Kate Meaney is a 10-year-old loner who solves imaginary mysteries and guesses the dark secrets of the shoppers she observes at the Green Oaks mall. Kate's unlikely circle includes her always-present stuffed monkey; 22-year-old Adrian, who works at the candy shop next door; and Kate's classmate, Teresa Stanton, who hides her intelligence behind disruptive behavior. Kate's grandmother has plans for Kate: send her to boarding school. But Kate doesn't want to go. Fast forward to 2003, where it's revealed through Lisa, Adrian's sister, that Kate disappeared nearly 20 years ago, and Adrian, blamed in her disappearance, also vanished. Lisa works at a record store in Green Oaks and is drawn to Kurt, a security guard whose surveillance-camera sightings of a little girl clutching a stuffed monkey hint that he might have ties to Kate's disappearance. Teresa, meanwhile, now a detective, has her own reasons for being haunted by Kate's disappearance. Gripping to the end, the book is both a chilling mystery and a poignant examination of the effects of loss and loneliness.

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