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# Food and Loathing: A Lament

*Betsy Lerner*

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# Food and Loathing: A Lament

*Betsy Lerner*

**Food and Loathing: A Lament** Betsy Lerner
Never before *Food and Loathing* has the intimate relationship between mood swings and food swings been so honestly chronicled. As a bright but chubby girl, Betsy Lerner believed that thinness was the key to success with friends and boys. By junior high, she had precisely divided the world of food into two camps: the dietetic and the forbidden. Becoming a member of the then-fledgling Overeaters Anonymous, she formed a cult-like devotion to the program and lost fifty pounds in a matter of months, only to gain it all back and more. "I am powerless over Hostess cakes," she writes, "and my life has become unmanageable."

Her twenties are marked by yo-yo dieting, depressive episodes, and a sadistic shrink who dubs her "the boy who cried wolf." Then, just as Lerner begins to realize her dream of becoming a writer, entering Columbia's prestigious MFA program, she spirals into a suicidal depression and lands at New York State Psychiatric Institute. There, a young doctor helps her take her first steps toward selfhood and unraveling the dual legacy of compulsion and depression.

A powerfully rendered story for anyone who has every wielded a fork in despair or calculated her worth on the morning scale.

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