

LOUISE ALBERT

Like many writers, I tend to write about aspects of my life that have been difficult. My first book, **But I'm Ready to Go** (published by Atheneum), was about a girl with learning disabilities. I felt that the book filled a void because no novel for young people had dealt with the frustrations and small victories of kids with this kind of invisible handicap. The main character of the novel was loosely based on my daughter, who has now grown up and is doing quite well.

A few years after the publication of **But I'm Ready to Go**, I was diagnosed with breast cancer and had a mastectomy. Not long afterward, I had lunch with some friends who were also living with breast cancer. All of them had had a really hard time knowing what to say to their children, especially their daughters. Because I had written an earlier book for young adults, they suggested I write another book for teenagers, this time on the subject of breast cancer. Maybe reading a book about how a family dealt with this difficult time could make things easier for all of them, and for other families facing similar challenges.

The idea appealed to me. There were many books about breast cancer written for adults, but none about how a family with kids faced this issue—and none that were written for young people. The idea appealed to me even more because my children and I were having a hard time ourselves.

I started writing.

Less Than Perfect was published in 2003 by Holiday House.

Teens who have lived through, or are living with, serious illness in their own families will relate to Laura's story in **Less Than Perfect**. The strained family relationships, the doubt, the fear and uncertainty. All of this on top of the normal teenage anxieties and pressures. Laura is a realistic example of a teen facing complicated, life-changing circumstances.

Perhaps this book will prepare and encourage teens to have open discussions with their families about the challenges they're facing—as envisioned by a group of survivors over lunch years ago.

Less Than Perfect is also an engaging love story. Laura and Paul are both facing their own family's health crisis, but they find ways to provide support and comfort for each other.



Louise Albert lives in New York. She graduated with honors in English from Cornell University, and received a Master's Degree in Creative Writing from the University of Michigan. She has had several short stories published and her first novel, **But I'm Ready to Go**, received a starred review in *School Library Journal*.

For twelve years Louise Albert has taught creative writing workshops at Manhattanville College. She has also taught at Iona College, SUNY's Empire State College, and the Adult Schools of Scarsdale and Mamaroneck/Larchmont. In 1985 she received the Matrix Award from the Westchester Chapter of Women in Communication for her achievements as a writer and a teacher.



Less Than Perfect

By Louise Albert

0-8234-1688-7 • Ages 10 and up

When fifteen-year-old Laura learns that her mother has breast cancer, the last thing she wants to do is tell everyone. What if her mother doesn't get better? What if... she dies? Maybe if Laura ignores the cancer, it will go away. But whenever she sees her mother, she's reminded of it all over again.

Then Laura meets Paul. His family seems so happy, so normal. But as Laura falls for Paul, she learns that even his life is less than perfect. With his help she realizes that when life brings about changes and hardships, having someone to lean on can make all the difference.

"What's particularly refreshing is that the novel is understanding rather than prescriptive.... A reassuring read for teens whose family is undergoing its own challenges."—*The Bulletin of the Center for Children's Books*