

The Book

Charlotte van Katwijk guards herself like a secret. Kids are cruel, and she knows if they find out she's adopted, she'll be a bully's easy target. When they are fourteen, Charlotte's best friend's mom commits suicide. It triggers in Charlotte a sense of urgency to find her birth mother before it's too late, and the answers to her burning questions are taken to the grave.

Seven years later, a tormented Charlotte comes face to face with her past. Will discovering more about her biological parents, and the circumstances surrounding her relinquishment, be enough to lay her demons to rest?

Umbilicus is a coming-of-age story set in Durban during the dying days of apartheid. The tumultuous zeitgeist of the era mirrors the inner turmoil of an angst-ridden adolescent as she grapples to form an identity and find her place in the world.

The Author

Paula works as a senior writer for a large PR agency in Johannesburg, and lives in a heritage building in Killarney with her husband and their young son. Her debut novel *Umbilicus* is based on her personal journey as an adoptee, going in search of and reuniting with her birth mom when she turned 21. She is currently working on its sequel, based on her real-life experiences as a young émigré, working in an adult store in Soho during the Cool Britannia zeitgeist of the 1990s. For more info, visit www.paulagruben.com

Category Memoir / Adoption

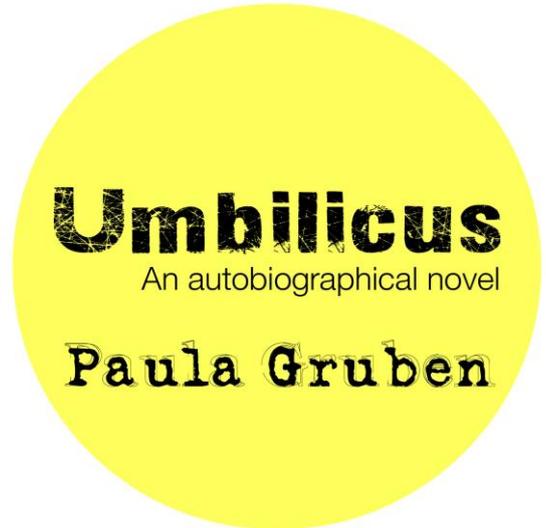
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Reviews

"A beautifully written, brave piece of work."

Melinda Ferguson, author and indie publisher

"I think you write engagingly, and your story touched me."

Jani Allan, author and adoptee

"Writer to watch for sure."

Paige Nick, author and Sunday Times columnist

"A bittersweet, well-crafted, inspirational read."

Samm Marshall, SABC presenter

"Easy-to-read, emotive, and real." **Glamour**

"As it is a true story wrapped in fiction, the information shared is entirely factual, and one can learn a tremendous amount. However, because it is written in a fictitious voice, it is an easy and gripping read too." **Women24**