

# SECRET STORMS

A Mother and Daughter, Lost then Found

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ForeWord Reviews





**WINNER- Autobiography**, Indie Reader Discovery Awards, 2013



**WINNER- Memoir**, Indie Excellence Book Awards, 2013



**FINALIST- General Non-Fiction**, Next Generation Indie Book Awards, 2013



**FINALIST- Autobiography**, International Book Awards, 2013

# PUBLISHERS WEEKLY

In this **touching memoir**, Julie is 19 when she is sent to a psychiatric institute in 1963 because of an unplanned pregnancy. As a young debutante in Philadelphia, there are things expected of her, and pregnancy out of wedlock isn't one of them. She gives birth to her daughter—whom she names Aimee—but the girl is put up for adoption. After she leaves the institute, Julie marries Frank, the man who got her pregnant, and they both have successful careers in show business.

Daughter Aimee is renamed Kathy by her adoptive family and is loved very much. But eventually, Kathy becomes curious about her birth parents and resolves to track them down. The book shifts between sections narrated by mother von Zerneck and daughter Hatfield, and both authors have **gripping stories** to tell. Readers will delight in their shared narrative, which is as heartwarming as it is engaging. von Zerneck's life alone would be a **fascinating read**, but combined with Hatfield's search for her mother it becomes **compulsive reading**.

“If I am ever set free. What then? Will I crash into walls forever like a blind butterfly? Will my wings be so torn and ragged that I will be forced to limp through the rest of my life?” In *Secret Storms*, Julie Mannix von Zerneck writes of a time when she was pregnant and forced to stay in a state mental health facility, unsure of her future. She gives up her child for adoption, and for more than forty years she continues with her life, marrying the baby’s father, becoming an actress and **a bookstore owner**, all the while dreaming of this lost child.

Kathy Hatfield, the memoir’s co-author and the daughter given up for adoption, begins her life well loved with two adoring parents and both a younger and older brother. She says, “It was as if I had been dropped into the first chapter of a fairy tale—but we all know how fairy tales go.” Mannix von Zerneck and Hatfield write alternating sections throughout the text, honestly portraying their lives while the thought of the other often sneaks into their minds and hearts.

**The book is beautifully written** and paints images for the reader when it can, such as Kathy’s memory of her first phone call with her birth mother: “The fragrance of white jasmine floated in on a cool, stiff breeze, and silver moonlight spilled over the backyard.” Mannix von Zerneck and Hatfield’s descriptive **writing styles are compelling**, to the extent that readers might feel they are sitting with the authors, listening to them tell their tale.

There is quite a bit of information offered here, such as background on Julie’s childhood and Kathy’s years of living with a stepmother who is suffering from bipolar disorder. All of this is written in an interesting way, more like a novel than a memoir, and keeps the reader involved. The formatting is clean and crisp, with a few sections that include black-and-white photographs that provide visuals for the setting of some of the story’s events.

Julie’s many years as an actress lend her an appreciation for strong story lines and word selection, which translate powerfully into her writing. Kathy is a teacher and a freelance writer, and it is evident that she values the importance of a well-crafted and complete piece. By the end of the book, readers may feel like they know the authors personally.

*Secret Storms* is an **amazing true story** and an enjoyable read. While the memoir is geared toward adult readers, it could just as easily appeal to high-school students, although a few parts contain strong language. Readers who have a vested interest in adoption, whether they are the adoptee or adopted, would be a natural audience for this book. But its appeal goes beyond the adoption issue, and the story involves even more than the connection between a mother and daughter. Truly, Mannix von Zerneck and Hatfield’s tale is **for anyone who values a life of family, honesty, and love.**

-Beth VanHouten

# KIRKUS

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# REVIEWS

In this **heartwarming dual autobiography**, actress Mannix and her daughter, Kathy Hatfield, recount the saga behind a separation of more than 40 years that began when Julie was forced to give up her newborn baby for adoption.

Mannix was 19 when she gave birth, but in the more conservative moral climate of the 1960s, since she was unmarried, she was forced to give up her baby. The married father deserted her; her parents turned against her; and, with the connivance of a doctor, committed her to a mental institution on a flimsy pretext. Strength of character pulled her through, and after being released, Mannix took the first steps in her movie career. All the time she pined for the child she had given up. Julie later reconciled with her parents and married her lover, producer Frank von Zerneck, who had since divorced his wife. Kathy was brought up by loving foster parents and only found out in her teens that she was adopted. Kathy later married, and after her stepfather died, she set out to find her biological parents. The debut autobiographers alternate in telling the stories of their lives right from early childhood, which reads almost like a fairy tale but which is resoundingly true. Mannix's life in the Philadelphia institution, and her insights into the patients' lives there, bring out the bleakness of institutional life, particularly shock therapy. She led a life apart from the rest of the world; on the day the world was transfixed by JFK's assassination, she was being transferred between hospitals. A particular strength of the narrative is the two distinct styles of writing; each author states her own point of view simply, without embellishment. The reunion is similarly understated, which makes the meeting even more **poignant**. Shining through both narratives is **goodness** and the **power of the human spirit**.

A dually narrated, **uplifting tale** on overcoming profound adversity.



★★★★★ Verdict: *Secret Storms* **reads like a thriller** and is told from the alternating perspectives of Julie and Kathy. The main characters are likeable and the **emotions run deep** on both sides.

Julie Mannix is a beautiful debutante who dreams of becoming an actress. Admitted to a prestigious acting school, Julie works at a summer theater and meets the older, dashing Frank von Zerneck.

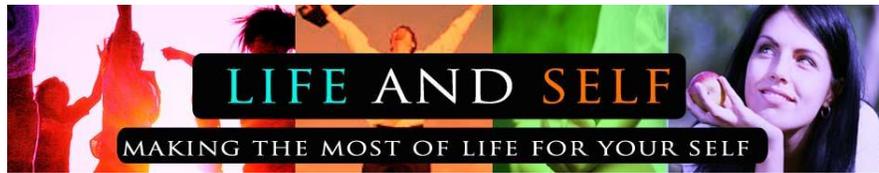
Frank is doting and loyal, but holds a secret that is only revealed once Julie learns that she is pregnant. Devastated by both developments, she leaves Frank. When her parents learn that she's pregnant, they commit her to a mental hospital.

In the hospital, Julie becomes determined to continue with her acting career. She also decides to give up her baby for adoption, as she's certain that only another family can provide a stable life for her baby. As it turns out, she and Frank later marry and go on to enjoy successful careers in show business. They also have two more children. But all along, they miss the daughter they gave up so many years ago.

While Julie and Frank enjoy a happy life in Hollywood, their first daughter, Kathy, doesn't have the childhood they expected. Her adopted mother dies when Kathy is very young. And her father goes on to marry a controlling and abusive woman. As a young adult, Kathy decides to look for her birth parents and is shocked to learn their identity.

*Secret Storms* reads like a thriller and is told from the alternating perspectives of Julie and Kathy. The main characters are likeable and the emotions run deep on both sides. It's **a perfect book for families** who are trying to reintegrate a child put up for adoption years earlier.

-Susan Blumberg-Kason



*Secret Storms: A Mother and Daughter, Lost then Found* is a story of deep emotion that reads like a thriller. Meaningful and deep, this is **one indie read you will remember.**

Julie Mannix's life ambition is to become an actress, and she's every chance of success. She's beautiful, talented, and has just been accepted to a prestigious acting school. Working at a summer theatre, she meets the good looking Frank von Zerneck. When she becomes pregnant, Frank drops a bombshell of a secret on her that leaves her devastated. She ends up being committed to a mental hospital.

Julie is not about to give up on her dreams. She gives her baby up for adoption—with good intent as she believes another family will provide a better life—and continues her acting career. Marrying Frank, both she and him create successful careers and have two more children.

Life is good for Frank and Julie, but they miss their first daughter, who it turns out has a far from perfect life. Her mother died while she was young and her mother in law is abusive and controlling. To salvage her life, she decides to search for her parents. She cannot believe what she finds.

*Secret Storms* is **an intelligent, deep and meaningful book**, packed full of emotion and clearly **written from the heart.** This is **one of the most mature pieces of indie writing you will read this year.**



It was 1963 and at nineteen years old, Julie Mannix, daughter of a well to do Philadelphia family, found herself pregnant by a married man. When she refused to get an abortion, her family committed Julie to a state run mental hospital against her will. Julie remained incarcerated until she delivered a healthy little girl in April and then forced to sign papers putting her lovely daughter up for adoption. After the baby was born, Julie was expected to move back home and pick up her life as though the previous nine months never happened, a daunting task as she secretly grieved for her little girl. Eventually Julie and the baby's father Frank reconnect, marry and have two more children together, never forgetting their firstborn.

Kathy Hatfield grew up in a loving family but at six years old, lost her mother to cancer. As the middle child, Kathy had difficulty adjusting to the loss and the arrival of a stepmother did little to help the situation as it shortly became clear, there was something wrong with Gloria. Secretly abusive to her stepchildren, life became hellish for Kathy and her brothers Jerry and Frankie. During a vicious fight instigated by Gloria, Kathy learns her brothers and she were adopted thus shattering what little remained of her secure sense of family. After her father foiled a particularly vicious attack on Kathy, Gloria left, taking nearly all the family possessions but restoring peace to the household. Kathy came to terms with being adopted, grew up, married and had children of her own before curiosity drove her to find out more about her birth parents.

Forty-three years later Kathy, Julie and Frank begin a cautious journey of reconnecting and discover that despite everything, they are still very much a family. This **tender, heartfelt true story** follows the different paths of both families and **offers hope** for those still looking to reconnect to their biological parents. It should be pointed out that while this family was successfully reunited, there are many reasons why parents choose to give their children up for adoption and it is unrealistic to expect such wonderful results in every case. This is **an uplifting story of hope and personal courage that is sure to resonate with most readers.**

-Sandy Amazeen

## Literary R&R

*Secret Storms* is an apt name for the lives of our two authors. Born into an affluent, fame-seeking family, Julie had an extraordinary childhood. After refusing to abort an unplanned pregnancy, 19 year old Julie was sent to a state mental hospital where she remained until the birth of her daughter, Aimee, who was immediately adopted. Kathy spent most of her young life unaware that she was adopted. The death of her mother, and the remarriage of her father changed Kathy's life forever when her stepsister announced that she was adopted.

*Secret Storms* is an **emotion-filled memoir** that exposes the intricate forces that exist in adoption. Julie and Kathy **lay bare their souls** and expose all their pain and frustration in a **beautiful, yet heart-wrenching account of searching for their identities**, as well as each other. **A must read** for anyone touched by the pain and separation of adoption.

## BESTSELLERSWORLD.COM

Once in a while you find a book that has **a voice that is so authentic** it actually pulls you into the story. That is *Secret Storms*, which is the story of a mother who was forced to give up her child and the child growing up without knowing she was adopted and finally finding the truth and her mother.

Julie Mannix grew up in an unusual family being that her father was an author and traveled the world. At their home in the Philadelphia area would be numerous exotic animals. To accomplish this task throughout the world required much of her life being spent in boarding schools. In many parts of the world, children were not always safe in the adventurous life of exploring parents.

Julie's dream was to become an actress in New York. What her parents did not plan on was Julie becoming pregnant while in New York. While visiting her home, she saw a doctor who informed Julie's mother, not Julie, of the pregnancy. The father of the child was already married. Her mother, like many mothers in 1963, looked for a solution. When Julie took three sleeping pills her mother then had her answer. This could obviously be a suicide attempt. She was committed to a private psychiatric facility for an abortion but she refused to sign the papers. Her punishment for the refusal was to move her as a pregnant mother to the state hospital for the mentally ill to wait for the birth of the child. There she took a vow of silence. When the baby arrived, the baby girl that Julie so wanted was quickly whisked away to be adopted. She had no choice in this matter. Only then was she accepted back at her home.

With her mother's help, Julie was able to return to New York to follow her dream and naturally to the man she loved. Now that he was divorced, they could marry, but Julie would always have a missing part of her with the baby that she gave up for adoption, Aimee.

Kathy did not know that she was adopted. She grew up in a loving family until tragedy struck and her mother died. As her father and brothers attempted to continue to have a normal life, they closely bonded through economic hardships and a difficult remarriage. During this time, Kathy discovered the truth, but life was unstable so she placed her clue to her real identity in a safe place and forgot about it. Years later by chance, she discovered the paper and quickly used the Internet to uncover the clues to her true identity.

*Secret Storms* is the story of these two women as they worked through their personal guilt and discovery of their relationship with each other and their families. This story is **a heart wrenching tale** that literally places you in each of these women's shoes, understanding the circumstances through their eyes. This personal journey of discovery for both women **shows us the true gifts of love that encircle each of us**. *Secret Storms* is **a marvelous journey** for everyone to read.

-Teri Davis

“This story will break your heart, bring on tears of joy, and make you believe in the healing power of love, forgiveness, and family.”

—**Meredith Rollins, Executive Editor,**  
*Redbook Magazine*

“In my writers’ workshops, the greatest gospel I can preach is the obvious one – to tell the truth, whatever form it takes. This amazing mother-daughter writing team exemplifies the concept to the max. The plot is Dickensian, rife with villains and struggle, the revealing of it, breathtaking in its simplicity and heartbreaking in its courage. What a story.”

—**Ernest Thompson, Academy Award-winning**  
*writer of On Golden Pond*

“A heartbreaking but ultimately life-affirming mother-daughter story that defies fiction. Every plot twist, every emotion touches a chord, even for those of us who have not had to endure such a brutal separation. Read it and weep—and then finally rejoice. An ode to the enduring power of family ties.”

—**Elizabeth Forsythe Hailey, author of**  
*A Woman of Independent Means*

“What an extraordinary and compelling story, all the more so because it’s true—and told so beautifully by its two heroines.”

—**Alice Maltin, producer & Leonard Maltin, film critic**  
*and correspondent for Entertainment Tonight*



*A Daughter Lost and Found* – December 2011 issue of *Redbook Magazine*



*Debutante in Distress*, episode 3, on the Oprah Winfrey Network



Appearance on **The Katie Show**, episode: **Finding Family**, April 2, 2013



Featured on **The Jeff Probst Show**, episode: **Adopted Daughter Found**, May 2, 2013