



# Hidden in the Heart

*Catherine West*

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## **Hidden in the Heart** Catherine West

For the first time in her life, Claire wants to know where she came from... After losing her mother to cancer, and suffering yet another miscarriage soon after, Claire Ferguson numbs the pain with alcohol and pills, and wonders if her own life is worth living. Adopted at birth, Claire is convinced she has some unknown genetic flaw that may be causing her miscarriages. She must find a way to deal with the guilt she harbors. But exoneration will come with a price. With her marriage in dire straits and her father refusing to discuss her adoption, Claire leaves everything she's ever known, determined to find the answers she needs. But what if the woman who gave her life doesn't want to be found?

## **Hidden in the Heart Details**

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# From Reader Review *Hidden in the Heart* for online ebook

## **Toni Shiloh says**

\*sigh\* What a perfectly, heart engaging read. From the moment this story started, I was engaged. I felt for Claire, her husband, and those around her. I loved how this story unraveled and I was sad to see it end. *Hidden in the Heart* reconfirms why I'm a Catherine West fan.

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## **Beth Vogt says**

I fell in love with Cathy West's writing while reading her first novel, *Yesterday's Tomorrow*. She follows that up with another compelling story. *Hidden in the Heart* is true-to-life and the characters West paints are vivid -- the kind that stay with you long after you've closed the book. What I appreciate most about West's writing is how she crafts a story with gut-wrenching honesty and yet a tenderness that kept me turning pages late into the night.

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## **Anne Campbell says**

If you have been adopted or have adopted or are thinking of adoption, this is the novel for you.

It's too much for one woman to take. Her mother has died, and she has miscarried. Claire doesn't know if there's something in her genes has caused the loss of the child. Prayer isn't in her vocabulary. It seems only logical that she should seek oblivion in alcohol and pills.

Not so obvious for her distressed husband, James, or her father, or her best friend. James tries to go to AA. Her father discourages her efforts to find her birth mother. Her best friend is afraid Claire is going over the edge. Depression settles in, and she finds another bar.

In a morning of clarity, she visits the Department of Children and Families and begins the process to find her birth mother. She knows it will make her father even more anxious--but he'll get over it. He has a new love since her mother died.

When the Department informs her her birth mother has refused the contact or even medical information, she snoops in her father's office and finds a name and a brochure for a lodge. Loading a suitcase and a case of her father's best wine into her car, she heads for Maine and her future.

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## **Lori says**

This book was my introduction to Catherine West as an author, and she could easily become one of my favourites. I wanted the story to go on forever. If I had the time, I'd have read it again immediately, but I'll just have to wait.

Not only is this book well-written, but the author exhibits an excellent understanding of human nature. She adeptly shows how one little thing after another can alter the course of a life, a marriage, a dream...anything. Even so, we see the triumph of love and the hand of God.

I think there is a bit of Claire in each of us, and I feel privileged to have witnessed her redemption.

**\*\*I received this book from the author/publisher for review purposes. The above is my honest opinion.\*\***

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### **Sarah Sundin says**

Realistic and memorable characters, a charming setting, and beautiful writing all support this incredibly moving story. Catherine West doesn't hold anything back - the grittiness of addiction, the pain of infertility, and the multi-layered emotions wrapped up in adoption - they're all here. I highly recommend this book.

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### **Valerie Comer says**

Claire Ferguson is a mess. Her mom died two years ago and, shortly after, she miscarried a baby. Her husband, James, thinks they'll be okay—they can get pregnant again—but Claire spirals into depression and drinking. When she meets an old friend from high school days who has found her birth mother, Claire wonders if doing the same will fill the empty spot in her own heart and enable her to go on. After all, what if her miscarriage was a result of a genetic flaw? She has to know.

Now estranged from James and back living with her father, Claire begins the search. Her dad is furious and refuses to cooperate. Though she'd known about her adoption while growing up, her parents had never been willing to discuss it. Still, she's unprepared for her dad's fury. It doesn't help that the social services worker gets back with Claire to tell her the birth mother does not want to release more information or connect with her.

With her dad gone away for business for a few days, Claire digs deep into his filing cabinets. What she finds there might change her life forever. . .or it might not mean a thing. If she wants to heal her life (which she does, some days) all she can do is move forward in an effort to find her identity.

Hidden in the Heart is the story of an adopted woman's search for her identity and examines the various cans of worms that might be uncovered. It also delves deeply into depression and alcoholism, so this isn't a tale for the faint of heart. I don't read or review a lot of women's fiction, but I found myself continuing to press the > button long after I should have gone to bed—two nights running! This is an awesome book that I truly enjoyed and would recommend to anyone interested in stories of adoption, family, and reconciliation.

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### **TAMMY CUEVAS says**

After losing her mother to cancer and then suffering a miscarriage, Claire turns to alcohol to get through this bleak period of life. She believes a genetic flaw is to blame for the loss of her baby, but as an adoptee, she has no way of knowing the medical history of her family. As her marriage begins to fall apart, Claire begins her search for her birth mother. But she fails to think of what will happen if this mystery woman does not

appreciate being found.

This is thought-provoking modern fiction. The beginning of the book is a bit confusing, moving between different characters without explanation, and it drags occasionally, but it picks up quickly, with the characters sorting themselves out in the first third of the book. The ending is a little too tidy, but fiction writers can do that; that's the reason for choosing fiction over reality.

As for the characters, it is easy to sympathize with Claire. Whether or not one is an adoptee, her pain and confusion is imaginable. As her marriage to James falters, she withdraws from those who love and want to help her. This is a very realistic reaction. James is, for the most part, long-suffering to the point of sainthood. He does get a bit preachy at times, but that is to be expected in this genre.

The honest exploration o

f substance abuse and even promiscuity is a welcome addition to Christian fiction. The characters have real problems and face the very real consequences of their actions, but this is not shown in a judgmental manner. Rather, grace and forgiveness are major components of the storyline.

This is a well-written novel with a strong Christian theme. I look forward to reading more from Ms. West.

4 stars

Disclosure of Material Connection: I received this book free from the publisher through the Litfuse Publicity Group book review bloggers program. I was not required to write a positive review. The opinions I have expressed are my own. I am disclosing this in accordance with the Federal Trade Commission's 16 CFR, Part 255 : "Guides Concerning the Use of Endorsements and Testimonials in Advertising."

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## **Christine Lindsay says**

As a birthmother---a woman who in real life relinquished a child to adoption---I highly recommend Catherine West's novel *Hidden in the Heart*. Adoption reunions are not something you can understand unless you've experience it yourself, or do a great deal of research.

In Catherine West's case, it is clear she has lived through the experience, because *Hidden in the Heart* grabs you by the heartstrings and doesn't let you go until the last page. Yet, this book is so much more than a tear-jerker that sweeps the reader away. The emotions shown in this novel are not those of a saccharine-sweet fiction, but are emotions nailed down by the hard edge of realism. By the end of the story though, you are satisfied that adoption is in many cases a wonderful processe that God uses to bless children and families.

In the story, Claire Ferguson is a grown up adoptee who after the death of her adoptive mother (her real mom) she is encouraged to seek out her birthmother. And as usual, Catherine West writes about real people-----people who are not perfect. Claire Ferguson struggles with a drinking problem. Her birth-mother can't face the fact that she is a mother, and the rest of the characters step off the page.

Once again, Catherine West is a writer to follow.

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## **Emilie Hendryx says**

In the middle of many struggles, Claire Ferguson just wants the truth. She's suffered the loss of her mother, a miscarriage, resulting difficulty in her marriage due to her escape into medication and alcohol, and now the haunting possibility she has a genetic disease the caused the miscarriage. The only way to alleviate her fears is to find her mother - that is, her birth mother.

Claire is adopted.

This story is one of struggle and fighting for the truth. Claire's journey to find her birth mother isn't an easy one, coming with a high cost, but in her mind it's a price that must be paid in exchange for answers.

Don't worry though - it's not all depression and sadness, Catherine does a great job of giving the reader only what they can handle in exchange for a story that will draw you into the characters lives and personal stories. The natural intrigue that comes with not having answers is woven throughout this story and will keep you searching for the entire truth - not just one persons version of it.

I really enjoyed this book! As someone who want's to adopt some day, Claire's perspective is very eye-opening. I'd highly recommend this to anyone interested in adoption, but also to anyone who enjoys reading true-to-life stories that draw you in and allow you to truly connect with the characters. Once you start this novel, you'll soon find yourself identifying with Claire and wanting to know the truth yourself.

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This was previously posted on my blog: <http://eahendryx.blogspot.com/2013/04...>

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I received a free copy of this book for review purposes, but was under no obligation to read the book or post a review. I do so under my own motivation and the opinions I have expressed in this review are honest and entirely my own.

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## **Ginny Jaques says**

I have to admit that when I first met Claire, I didn't like her very much. She seemed bitchy, whiny and full of self-pity. But that criticism was unfair, especially coming from a reader who has neither been adopted nor suffered a miscarriage. I have no conception of how painful either of those situations might be, much less both of them. But before long, in the reading, I was won over. To watch the development, and the redemption, of this character, as well as others who come into her life along the way, was heart-warming. The whole book was a worthwhile read.

Characterizations were genuinely believable; the love story was emotionally satisfying--realistic rather than saccharine-sweet; the inter-weaving of the lives of the various characters with Claire's life was intriguing; the humor added just the right touch of lightness when it was needed. I found myself in tears several times toward the end of the story, and a delightful plot twist caught me totally by surprise at the end. All of this adds up to a five-star review of this sweet, soul-satisfying story. Well done, Cathy West. I want to read the

next book.

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### **Dineen Miller says**

Hidden in the Heart is a compelling tale of forgiveness, redemption and hope. Catherine West brilliantly weaves a story that will leave you but will not leave you because it embodies what we all desire each and every day—the chance to love better than we did the day before.

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### **Suzanne Williams says**

I was prepared when I began reading this story for it to be yet another tale of someone with a drinking problem, this despite reading the blurb. As someone who has never taken an alcoholic drink in her life, this didn't appeal to me so much. Yet what I found within its pages was one woman's quest to make sense of the loss in her life and to work her way back to a place of love and healing. Beautifully written, Hidden In The Heart, has something for everyone. There's a bit of mystery. There's romance. There's conflict. That this story was personal to the author gives it additional meaning for me. I cannot imagine the struggle she had in doing her own search, nor the joy and peace waiting at its conclusion. The setting was beautifully done. I've never been that far north, but could definitely picture it. The plot was well-developed. Above all, this is a story about family – husbands, wives, brothers, sisters, in-laws, parents, grandparents, and children. It's a great read that I highly recommend.

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### **Kathleen says**

Hidden In The Heart is a poignant tale of loss, hope, forgiveness, and redemption. Author Catherine West weaves a powerful story about adoption, family, and a young woman's emotional journey in search of her birth mother. The author weaves an intricate fictional story based loosely on her own adoption experience.

Written in the third person narrative, the reader follows Claire Ferguson's emotional journey of self-discovery and healing. Claire is a grown adoptee whose life is in a mess after the death of her adoptive mother and suffering a miscarriage. Unable to come to terms with her grief and move forward in her life, Claire turns to alcohol and pills. She blames herself for her miscarriage and wonders if she has a genetic flaw that has contributed to the miscarriage. To get the answer, she has to find her birth mother, but when her adopted father won't provide the information or identity of her birth mother, Claire sets out on a journey with only one clue to find her.

Hidden In The Heart is a compelling story that grabs the reader by the heartstrings from the beginning and doesn't let go until the final word has been read. Author Catherine West delves into the powerfully emotional subjects of adoption, alcoholism and depression in a realistic and thoughtful way, she engages the reader to follow along with Claire as she goes in search of her identity and the closure she needs to heal her heart. The story takes the reader on an emotional roller coaster ride with enough drama, issues, and twists and turns that keeps them riveted and turning the page. This is not an easy story to read, you can't help but feel for Claire, her story draws upon the reader's empathy and compassion that has them feeling the full gamut of emotions.

With a realistic cast of characters who have flaws and are easy to relate to; engaging and witty dialogue and interactions; and a storyline that masterfully describes the variety of relationship dynamics of family, self-identity, and the ability to get through difficult and often traumatic life experiences with love, faith, hope and forgiveness; *Hidden In The Heart* is a beautifully written story that will simply stir your soul.

Disclaimer: I received a copy of the book from the author / publisher in exchange for my honest review and participation in a virtual book tour event hosted by Litfuse Publicity Blog Tours.

<http://jerseygirlbookreviews.blogspot...>

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## **Jo says**

After her mother dies and she has a miscarriage, Claire turns to alcohol and pills. She blames herself for her miscarriage and wonders if she has inherited a flaw that contributed to the miscarriage. To know that, she must find her birth mother. Her father won't identify Claire's birth mother so Claire sets out with only one clue to find her. This book unfolds a beautiful story about family, marriage, and children. Claire's pain is felt by the reader. West presents strong and loving characters and well described settings.

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## **Lisa says**

It takes more than blood to define family.

Cathy West seems to excel at poking for your heart, cutting it into tiny little pieces, ripping out your guts and sewing it all back together with a little extra love and admiration added in.

No sophomore syndrome for this author, in my opinion. Right from the start of West's new novel, *Hidden in the Heart*, I walked with Claire, who was completely out of control with grief and fear and loss of identity despite having everything most people only dream of. She certainly wasn't likeable, nor could she even like herself. In her determination to find a cause or someone to blame for her miscarriage she sets out to find her birth parents.

West drew the threads of her story together tactfully. It wasn't hard to figure out who was who, but, rather, the novel was more an exploration of who they became. Why do we abandon the things or people we love? Only from great depths can people rise to new freedom, and sometimes only when we are offered a second chance to revisit our past can we learn to forgive ourselves, let alone the people we wound.

Claire might have had everything from a husband determined to love her no matter how self-destructive and hatefully embarrassing she'd become, wealth and a loving home, but she threw it all away in order to search for answers to fill the hole in her identity, even if the rest of her birth family is determined to keep secrets or bent on revealing the worst of themselves. Readers shouldn't be surprised at the real conclusions, but will certainly grieve and rejoice with Claire and her new-found sense of self and family.

West says her novel is very loosely on her own experiences of being adopted. I've come to admire this author for her realism, the depth of character and the beauty-in-the-face-of-ugliness of her story lines. Well



done.

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