

WOMAN IN HIDING

A True Tale of Backdoor Abuse, Dark Secrets and Other Evil Deeds

by Kathleen Hoy Foley

Interview With The Author

What is the main theme in WIH?

The main theme, for me, is the battle and celebration of a woman discovering and claiming her voice and finding the courage to speak the unspeakable.

What fundamental message does WIH convey?

The feedback I receive on the message conveyed in WIH really varies with the reader. Personally, I see it is a social critique/commentary on courage: the general lack of courage in women to admit and speak the authentic truth of their own abusive experiences and their reluctance, which seems to be fear based, to support other women who are coping with their own abusive ordeals; the absence of collective courage in our culture to acknowledge harsh, “unsuitable” realities; and how through cowardice, individuals and society as a whole suppress and punish victims whose abusive experiences fall outside the culturally accepted norms—those *don't tell me* situations that create too much discomfort for the observers. Obviously WIH is a personal story but it has broad social implications. Countless girls and women who've been raped and sexually violated suffer crippling despair but are forbidden to even identify themselves as victims if the ordeal does not fit within our society's fixed, acceptable parameters.

WIH is also about silence, about keeping secrets isn't it?

Yes, it exposes the long-term, extensive damage of ignoring abuse and dismissing trauma, and how converting truth into secrets and covering it all up with “acceptable” lies is a bomb just looking for a time and place to explode. WIH is about breaking silence and speaking the hard truth. The truth, no matter how ugly, is the only foundation that can firmly support a life.

WIH has been called too controversial, too politically incorrect. Is it?

I resent the fact that my ordeal of being impregnated by rape and rescued by a confidential adoption process has been politicized and labeled too controversial. Rape and impregnation by rape is not a public controversy, it is a personal catastrophe. The confidential adoption process saved my life.

What do you mean?

The same way as rape is not making love, being impregnated by rape is not “having a baby.” *It is being forced to breed.* I was forced to carry something that I did not want, that did not belong to me, that never belonged to me, and that I was horrified by. It distorted my entire future; it forever destroyed who I was and who I could become. My ordeal happened long before Roe v Wade. I failed at suicide. The confidential adoption process rescued me; it enabled me to bury the trauma and build a new life.

You coined the term “maternalizing sexual violence.” What does that mean?

Maternalizing sexual violence is how society perpetuates violence against impregnated rape victims. It dismisses the agony of the victim and the reality of sexual assault simply because the female body responded biologically to a physical invasion. Society by way of religious and cultural beliefs wants to force motherhood on impregnated rape victims, demanding personal and maternal responsibility of them. It assumes a “maternal instinct,” which is inaccurate. Being impregnated by rape does not make anyone a *mother*. I completely reject and refuse all familial terms. Do not *ever* call me a birth mother. Or the insulting new term: *first mother*.

Why is the term birth mother so objectionable to you?

The term birth mother is a stigma that perverts the agony of sexual assault and twists it into a love-and-loss fantasy or brands the girl/woman a slut. It exists as a slur that invalidates and dismisses the anguish I endured at the hands of the rapist and the lifelong emotional damage I suffered as a result of the trauma. The label birth mother/first mother ties a frilly apron over a girl's tortured and butchered vagina.

We all know that just the word *mother* conjures up certain lovely, even sacred visions. Its mere suggestion instantly prejudices society against girls and women impregnated against their will, accusing them of wanton selfishness if they reject maternal responsibility for the violation of their bodies.

No familial terms or personal connotations, ever!

What terms are acceptable to you then?

Society can learn to be respectful and civil by using non-inflammatory, non-prejudicial terminology and stop its practice of using terms that dismiss the agony of sexual assault.

Acceptable terms:

Impregnated Rape Victim.

Biological Source/Origin.

Biological Female/Male.

Biological She/He. Adoptee.

You are criticized as hating adoptees. Is that true, do you hate adoptees?

No, I don't hate adoptees at all. I'm an adoptee myself.

Don't you think everyone deserves to know who they came from?

Deserve or not deserve is not the issue. The challenge for every one of us is to learn to come to grips with truths we do not want to accept and to learn to reconcile ourselves to what we cannot have. The personal and civil rights of one individual always supersede the wants and desires of another. One person's rights end where another person's rights begin. Coercing anyone into surrendering intimate information, whether it is medical or historical; forcing an interaction; bullying and tormenting a person into compliance is criminally abusive. There are laws against those behaviors.

Is WIH an indictment of adoptees?

No. WIH is an indictment of assaultive, abusive, violent and cowardly actions. Whether those abuses are committed by a parent, an acquaintance, a religious bureaucracy, an adoptee, or the government, makes no difference; it's all the same. To coerce, intimidate or bully another person into submission to satisfy a personal, political or religious desire is wrong, both morally and legally.

What can the reader learn from WIH?

You are stronger than you ever imagined. You have within you the power and the courage to confront and understand the trauma you suffered, whatever that may be. You are worth your own fight no matter what age you are. And you *will* win. You *will* be transformed.

What do you hope for WIH?

My prayer is that victims of sexual assault will see that they can speak. Speaking the truth is the only path to wholeness. Every victim who finds the courage to speak is a light in the dark leading the way for another victim to speak. The more light, the fewer places where predators can hide, and the safer it will be for those who are vulnerable and cannot protect themselves. My hope is that all victims of sexual assault will come to know their own courage.