



Secrets She Kept

Cathy Gohlke

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The secret a mother was forbidden to share . . . the consequences a daughter could not redeem—but will risk everything in her attempt.

All her life, Hannah Sterling longed for a close relationship with her estranged mother. Following Lieselotte's death, Hannah unlocks secrets of her mother's mysterious past, including the discovery of a grandfather living in Germany.

Thirty years earlier, Lieselotte's father, ascending the ranks of the Nazi party, demands a marriage for his daughter to help advance his career. But Lieselotte is in love—and her beloved Lukas secretly works against the Reich. How far will her father go to achieve his goal?

Both Hannah's and Lieselotte's stories unfold as Hannah travels to Germany to meet her grandfather, who hides wartime secrets of his own. Longing for connection, yet shaken by all she uncovers, Hannah must decide if she can atone for her family's tragic past, and how their legacy will shape her future.

Secrets She Kept Details

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Author : Cathy Gohlke

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From Reader Review Secrets She Kept for online ebook

Carrie Turansky says

In *Secrets She Kept* a daughter's longing to understand her mother's painful past takes her on a powerful journey of understanding and forgiveness. Cathy Gohlke beautifully weaves together truth and heroism against a stark backdrop of the unbelievable evil of the Holocaust. Readers can expect mystery, drama, intrigue, and romance in this unforgettable story of love and sacrifice. A Must Read!

Susan Snodgrass says

This is one of the most powerful books I have ever read! It truly deserves double the 5 stars allowed here.

Set in Nazi Germany 1938-1944 and in America and Germany in 1972-1973, it an astounding story of God's grace and power to help His children forgive anything.

Hannah Sterling, in 1972, has recently lost her mother and is about to lose her job unless she can control her bitterness. Given a leave by her principal, Hannah begins to pour over her mother's possessions, trying to find some answer to why her mother was always so cold and harsh with her and everyone else, why her mother and father fought all the time. What she finds leads her to Germany, to a grandfather she never knew she had. Hannah learns there are many, many secrets her mother kept from her, secrets that devastate her. This grandfather she found and hopes to forge a bond with is not the man she wants or needs him to be.

Lisielotte Sommer, Hannah's mother, also tells her tale, set in the years 1938-1944 in the midst of the horror of the Holocaust. The reader learns much from this woman who endures more than we would have imagined.

I won't give anything else away for fear of spoilers. Cathy Gohlke writes wonderful books, but this is her absolute personal best! I was entranced, absolutely captivated and had to tear myself away to do needful things like cook for my family! It was as if I couldn't rest until I finished this book.

My book is marked and underlined in many,many places. This is not a book you put down after you finish and forget about it. NO! It is a book that lingers on in your heart because it is so rich and powerful. Powerful in that it teaches the reader a huge spiritual principle: the power of forgiveness. I believe many believers struggle with this and I believe they will be able to let go of that bitterness after reading this wonderful story.

It was an absolutely amazing book and I will never forget it!

*I was given a copy of this book by the author in exchange for my honest review, which I have given.

Sarah Sundin says

Secrets She Kept by Cathy Gohlke is a sweeping story. The deep characterization, striking settings, and twisting story draw you in and raise poignant questions. If you lived in the claustrophobic terror of Nazi Germany, would you have risked your life – or compromised your values? And if you lived in postwar Germany, how would you deal with your past sin and shame? A lyrical tale of hope and light, even in the darkest places. Don't miss this book!

Andrea Cox says

by Andrea Renee Cox

"I would rather die for something than live for nothing."

~Secrets She Kept by Cathy Gohlke

Sacrifice. Selflessness. Compassion.

Do you see these things played out in today's society? They are difficult to find, I'll admit, but they are still there.

But were they around in Hitler's Germany?

You might think a quick, "No way!" You'd be wrong.

Some people risked their lives and their family's lives to hide Jews, to save them from the death camps. Others stole ration cards or forged documents to help the Jews escape into another country. Eventually, many of these heroes were found out and taken to the death camps along with the Jews they had been helping.

When I read books like *Secrets She Kept*, those monstrous days come to life for me. Authors like Cathy Gohlke make it easy to imagine the horrors forced upon innocent people. I usually end up crying fiercely, as if it was my own family who'd suffered at the SS guards' hands.

This book is not a happy one; don't go into it thinking that. Be prepared with a box of tissues. Truly, it is a great book, though, because it brings to light just how evil the Nazis were and how so many lives were destroyed -- even those that survived the camps.

However, it also shows how a select few overcame the tragedy that happened to them. There is a silver lining, but I'll leave it for you to discover. For this ray of hope, I am thankful. Because without it I was ready to hate this book. With it, well... it was a bit torturous, but then, so were the actual events in history. I thought Cathy handled the extremely tough topics fairly well and presented a piece of history a lot of people would like to forget ever happened. It's good that she's keeping it relevant for the next generation, because if things like this get lost, how can we learn from them? Make sure they're never repeated?

How do you learn from history? In what ways do you make certain that sacrifice, selflessness, and compassion survive to the next generation?

Do you think you would be brave enough to stand behind the quote at the top of this review?

I did not receive compensation for this review.

Renee says

The beginning was interesting & suspenseful, but that ending!!! Love the confessing church (Bonhoeffer) & Corrie Ten boom tie in. A book my students & I have greatly appreciated!

Jamie says

Well.

I'm just going to go ahead and tuck this amazing gem of a book on my bookshelf and occasionally take it down to simply give it a hug.

Internet, y'all know what I'm talking about – a book that manages to weave itself in your heart and continues to impact you days, weeks, after you've read it. Cathy Gohlke's latest fits the bill perfectly.

I was completely captivated from the very first page of this book. This book was such a reminder that everyone has a story (some inspiring and some not) and what we think and first encounter might not reveal the full picture.

But that's just one reason why I loved this book.

I loved that the modern day story took place in the 70s. It was really interesting to see post war Germany during the seventies. This was the first book I've read that did that. It was sad to think many people still held tight to their anti-Semitic beliefs decades after the war, but I'm not surprised either, just like when I read the stories of Reconstruction and Jim Crow. We're still fighting many of these wars today.

Both story lines were fabulous to read. Through Lieselotte's life, we see incredible bravery, what it looked like living in Nazi Germany, those who fought against the Nazi's underground and the horrors of concentration camps. Through Hannah, we not only see what I mentioned above, but also a beautiful story of hope, redemption and healing – even if it wasn't the way I expected.

“If I am caught, I would rather die for something than live for nothing.”

As with *Saving Amelie*, I appreciated the appearance of real life historical person (Corrie ten Boom). Gohlke always leaves me thinking not only about the past, but today's injustices. But, even with the hard topic, this book leaves you with hope.

As hard as it was to read (as WWII novels are) it's one of my favorite reads this year. Oh and the cover fits this book so perfectly.

What are some of your favorite reads this year?

(Thank you to Tyndale for a copy of the book in exchange for my honest review)

Originally posted at: <http://booksandbeverages.org/2015/08/...>

Olivia says

I don't think I could ever write a coherent review for this book. But out of everything in this book-even after all the pain and suffering and bitterness-I was reminded by the truth of forgiveness. Christ brings forgiveness, and Hannah found that through the journey of seeing who her mother truly was.

This is one of the toughest book I've read, but I couldn't put it down. Every page pulled me in and the characters became people that I know...became who we all are before we seek Jesus' forgiveness.

I loved the setting and the intrigue of this story. I hated the details of the camps and the evil people of that day, yet this author has beautifully described true forgiveness. And I also saw my life in a different way. How often do I complain? How often do I think I'm unhappy because I don't have such-and-such? Oh, that we wouldn't take what God has given us for granted.

I highly recommend this book. It's beautiful.

Leah says

On the surface, *Secrets She Kept* sounds like a book written for me: WWII fiction, dual narratives, family secrets - and for the majority of the story it was! Unfortunately, by the halfway mark things started spiraling downward and by the ending I just wanted it to be over.

For the full review and more, head over to *The Pretty Good Gatsby!*

Beth says

I won a copy of this book from Savanna's blog, *The Engrafted Word*, woohoo!

If you enjoyed this book or like this author, check out this interview - very interesting!

<http://theengraftedword.net/interview...>

Maureen Timerman says

What an emotional book, from beginning to end, and the worst of it, is that it could all be true. What a horrible time for mankind, and although part of the book takes place in the 1970's, we spend a lot of time in Hitler's Germany.

When the book opens you never expect all that is about to happen, and Hannah's Aunt is really not forthcoming with any information. So when she opens a strong box and finds letters from Germany, she is about to open a way to family, and horror.

I will tell you that once I started reading this, I could not put it down, it is an amazing story, and one everyone needs to remember. Hannah's worlds are about to collide in answering a lot of questions about her parents, and why Lieselotte, her mother, was rather distant with her. I would never imagine!

With all the secrets, that make her sick, she has to deal with the hardest of all, Forgiveness. I loved the author putting one of my most admired woman in this story, and knew that parts of this is really a true story, so in the end this is fiction based on fact.

How did people fall under the spell of that monster, and yet it happens as history starts to repeat itself, and in the name of religion.

A must read, and a story that will linger with you for a long time.

I received this book through Net Galley and Tyndale House Publisher, and was not required to give a positive review.

Cassie says

This book is beautiful. *Secrets She Kept* follows Hannah Sterling as she tries to piece together the clues her late mother, Lieselotte, left behind in order to learn who she really was. Cathy Gohlke seamlessly weaves Lieselotte's story of bravery and persecution during World War II with her daughter's discovery of her life.

Both stories are equally compelling, and constantly left me eager to read more. I would finish a chapter following Hannah and be intensely curious to know what happened next, and then the next chapter would take me back to Lieselotte. Then I would find myself wanting to read more about Lieselotte and it would be time to read about Hannah again. I love that both characters were so intriguing and I was invested in both sides of the story.

This book explores how our circumstances shape us and test our courage in the face of uncertain times. It explores what perseverance and strength in the midst of adversity looks like. And it explores what it means to struggle to understand someone you don't know and grasp for answers.

Secrets She Kept is a powerful novel. It reveals that even in the darkness, faith shines through.

With thanks to Tyndale Publishers for providing a complimentary copy of this book in exchange for my honest review. All opinions expressed are my own.

Originally posted on <https://bookshelvesandwindows.wordpre...>

Brianne says

Everytime I sat down to read this book I felt like I wasn't able to read it fast enough. Hannah and Lieselotte's stories were seamlessly intertwined throughout the novel. It was wonderful to be able to see the point of view from a survivor of the Holocaust as well as the daughter who is trying to uncover her family's secrets - with the help of her friend, Carl.

Throughout the novel, one major theme that is highlighted is forgiveness for the sins that people commit against one another and sometimes against ourselves. Hannah had to learn to forgive her family for their actions during the war and after the war. The story unfolds wonderfully through Hannah's visit in Germany, and through her mother's life as the daughter of a member of the Nazi Party.

Overall, I would recommend this book to anyone who wants to learn about WWII and how it affects survivors and the family of survivors. Cathy Gohlke writes a heartwrenching story of what it means to have hope, faith and above all, to forgive.

Carrie Schmidt (Reading is My SuperPower) says

My heart is full.

Some books I read and then find it very easy to come here and tell y'all what I thought about the characters,

the writing, the plot. And then there are those books that take over while I'm reading, that completely absorb me in the story and in the message and in the people I meet on the pages. These are the books that refuse to let go. The books that engage my emotions in deep and personal ways. *Secrets She Kept* is one of these books.

As such, I find myself uncharacteristically out of words when it comes to writing this review. Feelings, yes. Thoughts, plenty. Emotions, a heart full. Words... few that are adequate. One thing I can say with great certainty — EVERYONE needs to read this book.

The dual storylines (which both really tell Lieselotte's story – one from her own perspective and one from Hannah's as she uncovers the other side of things almost thirty years later) reflect more than just the atrocities that were committed during WW2 Germany. They serve as a reminder of how easily fear and ignorance can turn into hate – especially when skillfully manipulated – and how easily hate can lead to the kind of evil that targets a people simply for their religion or the color of their skin or the weakness of their bodies. It should serve as a reminder to all of us that prejudice is rarely harmless and that what happened in Germany could happen again too easily. Far too easily. May it never happen again in our lifetime.

But even more than that, *Secrets She Kept* tells another type of dual storyline – that of bitterness vs. forgiveness. Two lives, altered forever by the same evil. Both given the same choice of how their hearts will respond. How do you forgive someone who stole everything from you? How do you forgive the kind of evil that delights in dehumanizing someone else? These questions – and the answers – raised in the book go directly to the heart and are perhaps even more uncomfortable to face than the horrors of Ravensbruck. But their importance is vital and the discussions they precipitate have the potential to be so healing.

Secrets She Kept is a book that – when I finished reading it – I sat for a while and just absorbed the things I'd read, the people I'd met, the lessons I'd learned. It's a not an easy “feel good” read nor is it always comfortable. But it's beautiful and poignant and full of life. Lieselotte's story tells us of great courage, of great bravery, of great evil, of great loss, and of great love. Hannah's story is marked by the same, as well as by redemption and hope. As the two stories thread together over the course of the novel, your heart will overflow with a multitude of emotions ranging from joy to heartbreak to everything in between. Like me, you may not be able to put adequate words to your experience when you've closed the book on the final chapter. But I have no doubt that, like me, you will be forever changed.

(I received a copy of this book in exchange for only my honest review.)

Read my full review at [Reading Is My SuperPower](#)

Staci says

It's difficult to put my thoughts into words about this novel. It was engaging (I kept reading just one more chapter to see what would happen next), thought provoking and had a clear Gospel message.

The alternating story from 1930s/1940s to early 1970s was done more fluidly than I've seen in any other novel. Flawless transition from chapter to chapter.

The idea that antisemitism existed after the end of World War II had not crossed my mind previously (yes, I have been called Pollyanna a time or two). I also had not considered the guilt or burden felt by Germans that were able to see the impact of not helping those persecuted.

The imagery used allowed me to visualize the surroundings, smells, etc. Historical details added to the completeness of this novel.

I highly recommend Secrets She Kept to readers of historical fiction.

Terri says

review also found at <https://kristineandterri.blogspot.com...>

I listened to this story via audio book and I have to admit that by the middle of this story the book was going with me everywhere. I was listening while cooking, cleaning, walking the dog and even while in the shower. I took every opportunity to multi-task just so that I could keep listening to the story.

This is a must read for fans of WWII stories. I am not sure why I hadn't discovered this story before now but I am so glad that I accidentally discovered. This story is tragic at every corner, as war can be, however still manages to tell a fresh perspective from someone living in Germany at the time of the war. This story is not all roses and happy endings nor it should it be because what really is during war. Instead it tells the story from a perspective of both those who were pro the Nazi regime and philosophy as well as those that did what they could to oppose it. It also had the very honest reactions of a present day relative as they slowly uncover the horrific and tragic events that occurred and in the process began to understand her heritage as a result.

I was hooked from the beginning of this story and could not believe the deception that occurred within the story. I probably shouldn't be so naïve, in wartime I am sure this is common place. Actually looking at parallels to what is going on in the world today, it is still pretty common place in places of war and places of peace (for now) and downright scary

I will leave it at that as this story needs to be discovered itself. This easily would have been a 5 star read for me if it were not for the very last chapter. It was not because of the outcome of the story but more because of how the tone of the story changed. It became very religious and preachy (to me) on the last chapter and this did not fit in with the rest of the story. Although there were some religious characters throughout the story, at no point did I feel like Gohlke was preaching to me. In the last chapter, I very much felt like she was preaching to me. It changed the whole tone for me and I had to deduct an entire star for this as it prevented the story from sticking with me as this one for sure would have otherwise.

Cara Putman says

This book is captivating and will challenge you all at the same time. I inhaled the story of a daughter taking a trip to Germany to understand her now-deceased mother. She hopes that by following a clue, she will finally understand the woman who never seemed to love her. What she finds will radically change her perception of her mother, lead her to family she didn't know she had, and bring her to a point she must surrender or accept a life of bitterness.

Told in dual storylines (her mother's during WWII and hers in 1972), this story is a page-turner that might make you consider whether the past will be repeated in our time. It is also a story of sweet forgiveness that comes after a long battle. And I loved the way the author wove two very special sisters into the story. No, I won't tell you who they are because it would rob the joy of discovering these very real people in the midst of

Ravensbruck.

This is a story I will remember and think about for a long time.

Anne says

I don't always enjoy dual timeline stories, but this one I did, perhaps because the two stories were only separated by one generation. Germany in the seventies through the eyes of the children of those who survived the war- that was a particularly unique perspective on WW 2 that you don't usually see.

The modern storyline romance element of the plot was fairly predictable, but the rest contained some unique and surprising twists.

Not everything in the story ties up with a neat little bow-characters die with words left unsaid and issues unresolved. Certain characters are a realistic blend of good and bad and sometimes unclear motives. In this way, this novel is very true to life. I always appreciate a novel that achieves this level of realism, even if it's difficult to read.

The only real complaint I have is that the main themes and messages of the book -namely, forgiveness- were written with a heavy hand, especially at the end. The whole ending, in fact, seemed a little rushed.

Dawn says

After her mother's death, Hannah Sterling wishes that they could have been closer. All of her life, Hannah felt that Lieselotte did not love her and was incapable of love. When she overhears a conversation between her aunt and a family friend, Hannah is determined to find the answers that will unlock Lieselotte's past and possibly provide closure for Hannah. One startling discovery is that Hannah has a grandfather living in Germany. To discover all she can about her mother, Hannah travels to Germany. There she discovers that thirty years before, Lieselotte's father was quickly ascending the ranks of the Nazi Party and that he wanted an advantageous marriage for his daughter - not Lukas, the boy Lieselotte has loved for years. Lieselotte had no idea how far exactly her father would go to ensure her cooperation, and his actions lead to a rift that Hannah has no hope of bridging. Hannah's grandfather is also hiding wartime secrets. His secrets force Hannah to reevaluate all she knows about her mother and to figure out how she can atone for her family's tragic past as well as use the information to shape her future.

Every since I read *Promise Me This*, I've discovered that Cathy's books are very gripping. They have a tendency to hold me captive and not let me go. This one was no exception.

Set both in WWII and the 1970's, I was captivated. I had an idea as to where Lieselotte's story was going and I wasn't surprised to discover that I was right. Hannah's story on the other hand, I had no idea in what direction her story would go. I loved the WWII portion better than the other. But overall, it was a good book.

Both Hannah and Lieselotte are deep characters. Yet what I really loved is how Hannah's attitude changed toward her mother as she learned exactly what happened. For a while, it seemed that every character in the book had a secret. And some of those secrets were huge. But the way things resolve after they came to light, made wading through the secrets worth it.

I received this book for free from Tyndale for the purpose of reviewing. My thoughts and opinions are my own.

Recommended to fans of Laura Frantz, WWII, Brock & Bodie Thoene, Kristy Cambron

Rating - 4 stars

Michelle says

There is always that author who I anxiously wait for to see what is written next. Cathy has written some of my all time favorite novels and this one now goes in that category. I loved this book, I couldn't put it down it was so good. It's heart wrenching and real and captivated my imagination until the end. I loved the characters present and historical and the setting and storyline is wonderfully written. I have read many books set during WWII but this story has a new angle on those who tricked Jewish people into getting them captured. The lies and the holocaust and the family dynamics are all combined in this novel and present and past collide in ways that I wasn't expecting.

One of the best books I have read this year.

Also, if you haven't read Cathy's other books you should!

"I received a copy of this book from Tyndale Publishing for free in exchange for an honest review."

Sarita says

It is difficult to find the right words for a story which is so beautiful but at the same time so heartbreaking.

This is not an easy book. The pages reveal sad and ugly truths of how inhuman a dark age in history was. I visited Dachau one year when we toured through Europe, and you see all the facts and pictures but in some way cut yourself off from the ugliness. Through stories like this one, you just can't hide anymore.

My heart broke for Lieselotte and everything that happened to her and what was stolen from her and also Hannah. I never thought about how things were for the people who survived the war and this book helped me to understand that even though the war was over, the fear, heart break and false view of brain washed Germans still remained. It is so difficult to find forgiveness for 'these Germans' and that is just what God asks from us.

The jump between the two story lines was brilliantly done. This is my favourite story by this author and probably my favourite WW2 book, even though this is a heavy and sad book.
