



# Umbilicus: An autobiographical novel

*Paula Gruben*

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## **Umbilicus: An autobiographical novel** Paula Gruben

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 South Africa's biggest port city 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.

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