



Ghost Wife: A Memoir of Love and Defiance

Michelle Dicinoski

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Michelle Dicinoski has found the love of her life – and now she just wants to get married and live happily ever after. The only problem is, she's in love with an American woman, Heather, and neither Australia nor America recognises same-sex marriage. What to do when pride and prejudice – love and the law – collide? For Michelle, the answer is clear: go to Canada and get hitched there.

This is the deep, funny, heartwarming and brave story of that trip. Along the way, Michelle reflects on why anyone would want to get married anyway, on the power of acceptance, and on the startling ghost stories in her family. She investigates the hidden worlds of people who make lives for themselves outside social norms, sometimes illegally. Michelle doesn't want to disappear, not from her family and not from society. But living in Australia, will she always be a ghost wife?

Ghost Wife: A Memoir of Love and Defiance Details

Date : Published February 27th 2013 by Black Inc

ISBN : 9781863955959

Author : Michelle Dicinoski

Format : Paperback 224 pages

Genre : Nonfiction, Lgbt, Biography, Autobiography, Memoir, Glbt, Lesbian



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Liz says

I cried, admittedly I'm very hormonal today but even so, even so

Sally906 says

Beautifully written - and I so related to the story. I have a few same sex friends who are either 'ghost' wives (or grooms) or not in a formal relationship because the laws of Australia won't let them. It is so upsetting for them that their love and commitment isn't allowed or recognised in Australia. My hope and prayers are that one day very soon this will change.

Michelle tells us about her marriage to her wife Heather. This is an upbeat story of the facts - the love- the family reactions - and some less nice events. Their story is peppered with the stories of various same sex couples through history in Australia and the USA.

Lots of love and laughter.

Suzanne says

I heartily recommend this book. Disclosure: Michelle is my cousin by marriage and I was honored to meet her several years ago. Woven around the story of her wish to marry are stories of others whose lives she discovered in researching her family and her country while looking for other "ghost wives." Her story is touching without being cloying, brave and down-to-earth.

Ghost Wife is a book that young women who are wondering about their own sexual orientation should read. Michelle vividly describes the journey towards understanding herself and the reactions she encountered from her family.

Finally, this is a beautifully written book, as you would expect from a poet. Humor, reflections, spot-on descriptions, and courage mark this wonderful story of adventure, hope, and happiness.

Alan White says

Incredible, the story of Michelle Dicinoski, and her wife's journey to the one place where they can be married is a story of love, courage, identity, acceptance and discovery. It's a journey over oceans and through the past, told with quiet adventure and grand intimacy. The story is so gripping I finished the book in 2 days! The author has an engaging voice that is easy to read and get lost in. Then, at any given moment she will hit you with a single sentence, maybe a description of some mundane thing you've overlooked a thousand times, that has such poetic beauty it shows you a hundred different worlds in a instant. Definite must read!

Bonnie says

This is a beautiful brave story about love, acceptance, belonging and marriage. Regardless of gender or sexuality, or even whether you believe in marriage- straight or gay- there is probably something within these pages that almost everyone can relate to. The quirky anecdotes about Brisbane and queer history are absolute gems. Sadly, the Afterword shows that even though we have been heading in the right direction since the publication of this book, we still have such a long way to go. Bravo, Michelle & Heather.

Marie says

I was surprised at how moved I was by this book.

I maybe, may have, possibly, teared up a bit when Dicinoski was talking to her grandfather-in-law while they were playing with the dreidel. Yes, okay. I have become a stupid girl who cries at things.

I felt like the stories were hit and miss. Sometimes Dicinoski made me feel so overwhelmed with love and sadness. Other times I just felt nothing.

I was surprised at how little I felt about her Japanese heritage. My family is a total scramble. I think maybe that's probably why. I don't see the author as different because she is 1/8th Japanese when, like many other Australians, my parents are immigrants with a whole heap of crazy lineage inside them. I suppose because of this I care very little about the physical genetic markers of people from somewhere 'not-Australian'. But people do care about that stuff, like those people who watch that 'Who Do You Think You Are' show. I suppose it's just one of those emotional things that are out of my grasp.

I loved the history of the stories. I loved that it mattered to Dicinoski that these histories be remembered, and that you could see that in her prose.

I found the conversations were sometimes just a bit too TV conversational, if that makes any sense. As real and beautiful as the other stuff was, the conversations just kind of felt unnatural.

3 Stars (For the things I loved and the things I found dull)

Jessica says

This amazing book discovery comes at an interesting time as countries around the world make history for legalising same-sex marriage.

As an Australian, I was disgusted at how our government has not only treated this issue in the past but as well as rewriting laws to pretty much outcast anyone. Let's hope that changes very soon.

So inspirational and makes me thankful at how lucky I am to have such supporting family and friends.

Favorite quotes:

- * You don't notice it right away, but traces of what's vanished always stay behind to haunt those who remain.
- * It was almost as though she had built an alternate world in her head, a better world that was easier to believe in than the one where we found ourselves.
- * "Welcome my new daughter"

Anindita says

A moving story illustrated with beautiful prose about LGBT in Australia. It's honesty and simplicity speak volumes about the personal and collective histories of those who identify on the spectrum. Reading this in 2018, since the recent legalisation of same-sex marriage within Australia, really shows that love wins every time.

Lance Eaton says

Dicinoski writes a great memoir that contrasts her family's history with her pursuit to legitimate (at least in the eyes of the public) her relationship with her life-long partner and wife, Heather. The story revolves around Dicinoski and Heather travelling to Canada from Australia to get married in part to celebrate their love and in part to spite the bigotted policies of Australia. However, the narrative is more than just a "let's go to the chapel" story. Instead, Dicinoski explores how the failure for the culture to acknowledge her relationship is part of a story played out many times before with her family members who disappear in one way, shape, or form and it's this story--the story of invisibility--that is as moving as seeing Dicinoski and her partner solidify their love. In many ways, it parallels Dan Savage's memoir, *The Commitment* but has a very distinct flavor worth partaking.

Amy-Jane Wewer says

A beautifully written story of love in all its difference and sameness; in all its personal and historic importance. Binds the present in contemporary Australian, American, and Canadian attitudes to same-sex marriage with the past in the hidden and often forgotten tales of historic stories of LGBTQ love. A beautiful book; thoughtful, moving, and haunting too. An easy but not forgettable read.

Sean Kennedy says

Everyone should stop what they're doing and immediately buy this book.

Michelle and her partner Heather have to leave the country in order to marry. They know that once they step outside the Canadian border their marriage will dissolve - both in Michelle's homeland (Australia) and Heather's (the US). Michelle worries that this will make her a 'ghost wife', a wife that becomes invisible when the government and a lot of the people refuse to see the validity of her vows.

By deftly mixing her memoirs with the hidden histories of other lesbian couples who have had their relationships 'voided' or unacknowledged in the past, Dicinoski gives us an intense, heartfelt, personal story of a marriage. A marriage. A real marriage. A marriage that happens to be between two women. A marriage that should be acknowledged as valid and as loving as those other couples that inhabit their lives.

Dicinoski puts voice to what it means to be outside 'normal' society. So many times I found myself nodding along, hearing reflected back to me what I have said to other people - but this book is for everyone. Sadly it will probably only be the choir that reads it.

So much queer history is silenced, or when uncovered, is denied vociferously by those with an agenda. Diconoski explores some of these histories, and adds to her own one that cannot be obfuscated or denied.

GET THIS BOOK.

Michelle says

I found this story to be honest and beautiful. Your heart will break and it will soar for these two women who simply want their love to be free and open. Dicinoski bravely reveals wrenching scenes of rejection and disappointment within her family that only drive her to boldly pursue her own happiness, whatever form that may take. That is contrasted with the sweetness of falling in love with her perfect mate. You will cheer for Michelle and Heather.

Trish says

I really liked this. On the surface this is a story of a woman who travels to the other side of the globe to marry the woman she loves.

But really, Dicinoski weaves so much more into her memoir - family, visibility, history, the possibility that no matter where we begin, we can live grand, fabulous lives - sometimes beyond our own imaginations.

Her writing is mostly conversational - like she's telling me her story, sitting at the kitchen table with a pot of tea between us - and then surprises with passages so full of beauty and insight that all I could do was stop and say "oh my".

I loved the glimpses of women who loved each other in history and how their relationships were captured on the public record. I loved how my hometown, Brisbane, was a returning character in her story of place and belonging. But mostly, I loved how Dicinoski makes her love visible.

Lovely.

Calzean says

The true story of the Australian author and her partner and their journey to obtain same sex marriage in

Canada. She describes her upbringing in Queensland and her confusion as to her sexuality in High School and then at University.

She talks about other women from decades and centuries ago where lesbians weren't acknowledged. She also writes about her own family with its own series of interesting characters.

She realises to be brave you need to be yourself and accept others for what they are. Part of this acceptance was to create a permanent record of her marriage to the woman she loved.

The Bookish Gardener says

I liked this book but I found the cover image really disconcerting. Interlaced fingers. Long fingernails. Was I reading a lesbian love story memoir? After recently reading *Fingersmith* by Sarah Waters, someone asked do all lesbian novels have images of fingers (gloves) on the cover! To be fair, I was getting into this book when my much awaited *Shantaram* sequel, *The Mountain Shadow* arrived from the library. I was seriously distracted. I liked Dicinoski's writing, especially the line, 'Apart, she and I were great, together we were spectacular.' The story followed the couple's travels to America/Canada to get married. The theme of the book was the author's struggle with not being able to be married, or recognised as married in Australia, and to forever be 'a Ghost Wife'. This part did not resonate with me. This is a purely personal thing. I am all for same sex marriage but my own plans for a same sex marriage are so not on the radar, even though I respect other's struggle/angst/wishes to do so. The fact that I disagreed with the author's invisibility is redundant. I did like her description of American/Canadian friends and found their connections very true to life. Sorry to say I didn't get past this point as the library wanted the book back and *The Mountain Shadow* loomed large.
