



Welcome to the Pine Away Motel and Cabins

Katarina Bivald

Sourcebooks Landmark (Jan 7, 2020)

Softcover \$16.99 (448pp)

978-1-4926-8101-4

Death has never been quite so uplifting as it is in *Welcome to the Pine Away Motel and Cabins*, Katarina Bivald's feel-good novel about a friendly ghost who's determined to repair relationships from the not-far beyond.

Henny always assumed that there'd be more to death than this, but here she is: still in her hometown; still in her once-favorite polka dot blouse; and still immersed in drama. So Henny, who's always edged optimistic, decides to devote her lingering time to doing what she does best: bringing folks together.

There's much to repair. Before she died, Henny reconnected with Michael, her first love, who fled Pine Creek after high school. Many in town assumed that she and her best friend, MacKenzie, were lovers; they find MacKenzie less tolerable without Henny as a buffer. Throw in Henny's set-in-his-ways father and a returning friend, Camilla, and the stage is set for blow-ups.

Pine Creek, which boasts more churches than bars, has an unhappy history of being hostile to its LGBTQ citizens. When the motel, whose owners stand against hateful measures, becomes the focus of the churchgoers' ire, MacKenzie, Camilla, and Michael fight to preserve it. It's a battle that draws outsiders in and that exposes the biases that undergird Pine Creek's cozy façade. Henny whispers encouragements into the ears of those whom she loves, hoping to effect reconciliation, but harmony is hard coming with people's pride in the way.

This is a small-town story, but it's bright with examples of LGBTQ allyship. MacKenzie may be pushed toward an unfair middle ground with the community, but no one drops Camilla's dead name, and that's a happy, if unlikely, grace. The book strikes a tenuous balance when it comes to the conflict, but its outcomes are breezy and hopeful. By checkout time, *Welcome to the Pine Away Motel and Cabins* has cemented itself as a lighthearted delight.

MICHELLE ANNE SCHINGLER (January / February 2020)

Disclosure: This article is not an endorsement, but a review. The author of this book provided free copies of the book to have their book reviewed by a professional reviewer. No fee was paid by the author for this review. Foreword Reviews only recommends books that we love. Foreword Magazine, Inc. is disclosing this in accordance with the Federal Trade Commission's 16 CFR, Part 255.