



Teaching the Cat to Sit: A Memoir

Michelle Theall

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A compelling memoir of a gay Catholic woman struggling to find balance between being a daughter and a mother raising her son with a loving partner in the face of discrimination.

From the time she was born, Michelle Theall knew she was different. Coming of age in the Texas Bible Belt, a place where it was unacceptable to be gay, Theall found herself at odds with her strict Roman Catholic parents, bullied by her classmates, abandoned by her evangelical best friend whose mother spoke in tongues, and kicked out of Christian organizations that claimed to embrace her—all before she'd ever held a girl's hand. Shame and her longing for her mother's acceptance led her to deny her feelings and eventually run away to a remote stretch of mountains in Colorado. There, she made her home on an elk migration path facing the Continental Divide, speaking to God every day, but rarely seeing another human being.

At forty-three years of age and seemingly settled in her decision to live life openly as a gay woman, Theall and her partner attempt to have their son baptized into the Sacred Heart of Jesus Catholic Church in the liberal town of Boulder, Colorado. Her quest to have her son accepted into the Church leads to a battle with Sacred Heart and with her mother that leaves her questioning everything she thought she knew about the bonds of family and faith. And she realizes that in order to be a good mother, she may have to be a bad daughter. *Teaching the Cat to Sit* examines the modern roles of motherhood and religion and demonstrates that our infinite capacity to love has the power to shape us all.

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