



Media kit

AUTHOR AND DETECTIVE

Sonya Leeding

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Author Biography

Born in New Zealand, Sonya Leeding, relocated to Australia with her parents and three siblings in 1987. Sonya grew up in Logan and relocated to the Gold Coast in 2001. After completing a double degree, a Bachelor of Arts in Justice Studies and a Bachelor of Laws Sonya practiced law for a short time and found her true passion in policing in 2003. She has been a Queensland Police Officer ever since, working at Southport, Runaway Bay, and eventually finding her passion, and fulfilling a lifelong dream becoming a detective with the Child Protection and Investigation Unit.

Sonya was widowed at 32 years old and has had to adjust to life on her own, as a single mother since. Losing her husband has taught Sonya many valuable lessons, but most importantly has allowed her resilience to shine through, which is also evident in her work in the Child Protection Unit. Sonya's debut book, 'Blue Widow' is the journey of how she navigated life as a police officer after love and loss. It is a journey of resilience and the discovery that trusting in yourself can be the very thing that saves you. This story will introduce you to the humans behind the badge.

When Sonya is not protecting vulnerable victim's, you will find her in mum mode with her two children Hudson and Grace. Sonya has a passion for baking, it soothes her soul. Sonya's downtime is spent at her local F45 gym or out walking with Labradoodles Elliot and Amalie. Sonya is also a keen camper and with the assistance of her 1968 Viscount vintage caravan, 'Felicia' manages to find peace and quiet at new locations around South East Queensland.



Book Biography

Blue Widow is the harrowing story of Sonya Leeding, whose husband Damian was shot during a botched armed robbery at the Pacific Pines Tavern in Queensland, Australia.

Sonya's no-holds-barred account of the night of 29 May 2011 and the events that unfolded after this tragedy offer an extraordinary insight into the deeply personal nature of loss and the impact that being in the public eye has on the grieving process.

Blue Widow reveals the real people behind the police uniforms; the mothers, fathers, children, and siblings; and how—in a split second—life can be heartbreakingly and permanently altered.

Target Audience

- Anyone who has loved and lost.
- Anyone who is grieving and wants to give up.
- Anyone who is a little bit nosy and wants to know what happened to Sonya.
- People with a sense of humour who can look on the bright side of life.
- Anyone with a keen interest in the people who are behind the badge and the suit of blue



Celebrity Endorsements

Karl Stefanovic – Media personality

Imagine. Just for a second. An awful harrowing second. Kissing your loved one goodbye. And they never return. Ever. You are left. Alone. Your world breaks. I met Sonya in the days following the death of Damian. How she didn't simply stop breathing I have no idea. She couldn't I guess. With two beautiful children. This is the story of how she navigated her way through the darkness. Through that never ending darkness. To the light. It's a story of a courageous mother. A daughter. A widow. A wife. And a cop. What a read. What a woman.

Moyra Major – Radio personality

Being a Gold Coaster I had heard and saw the tragic story of Damian Leeding's death. I actually went to the funeral, even though I had never met him, Sonya or their family. I think so many of us felt connected in some way to the family, and the tragedy they were enduring.

Blue Widow tells the stories we didn't see, the real stories of a strong woman having to endure something she shouldn't have, something unimaginable.

Sonya is brutally honest, and that's what makes this book so wonderful and also so inspiring. It shows the behind-the-scenes grief of this wonderful woman we met in her worst moment. The minute I started reading it, I could not put it down.



Book excerpt/teasers

I am Sonya Leeding, single mother of two, police officer, detective, and widow.

You see, I had a very 'normal', ordinary, pleasant life until my husband, Damian, went to work one night and never came home. He was shot in the head during a botched armed robbery at the Pacific Pines Tavern on the 29th of May 2011. He eventually passed away on the 1st of June 2011.

Damian was a police officer. Damian was just doing his job.

Now Damian's dead. What do I do? Who am I?

I am a blue widow.

I first saw Damian about halfway through my training while I was out on the obstacle course one day. I had seen him around the dormitories before but didn't know who he was, nor was I interested. He was a recruit in the January 2003 intake, two months before me. He certainly stood out with his ginger hair and sporting prowess.

One day, Sandi, one of my squad mates, and I decided to go and do a practice run through the obstacle course. Back then, the obstacle course was the epitome of your physical training; the quicker and more efficient you were at bounding through or over each obstacle, the better time you achieved, and it was another tick in the box of becoming a police officer. For some recruits, it was difficult to master.

The final physical test at the academy is comprised of the 2.4-kilometre run, followed by a short break afterwards, then completing the obstacle course in a set time for your age group, and finally a dummy drag—dragging a seventy-kilogram dummy up and down the auditorium several times. The obstacle course was a two-hundred-metre run, negotiating twenty-two obstacles, and another two-hundred-metre run at the end. The obstacles included jumping over walls, running up ramps, balancing on a beam, squeezing through window spaces, negotiating a variety of fences, scaling huge pipes, and taking large steps down a climbing wall within a required time. The whole point of it is to simulate an urban environment that you may have to negotiate in your daily duties as a police officer.

On this day, we were to complete a run-through of the course, and the first obstacle was a solid besser-brick wall we had to amble over. As I attempted to launch myself over the wall, I got the giggles and ran straight into it, flat against the wall, in a fit of laughter. Sandi was standing to the side of the obstacle, laughing at me. Then I noticed her face change and saw she was looking in astonishment towards the remainder of the course, and I wondered what had caught her eye. I gave up trying to climb the wall and walked over to join her. Flying towards us was this super-fit-looking ginger-haired man—the same one I had seen in the halls of the dormitories. He was stacked with muscle. He had rock-hard arms and chest and lean, muscular legs, and he was not much taller than me. I'm five foot four. He was running across the balance beams. These were not low gymnastics beams; they graduated in height at even intervals.

Sandi and I continued to watch as he threw himself over fences and walls and bounced over tunnels. I was very impressed with his skill and couldn't believe how quick he hopped over all the obstacles compared to my clunky jumping and jerking to get over them. Other than marvelling at how fit he was, there was nothing more to it.

And that was my first memory of Damian. We never spoke to each other at the academy, and I didn't even know his name.

Testimonials

Geoff Sheldon – Superintendent (Crime & Support Services)

I can honestly count on my left hand how many books I've read (other than uni texts) since I left high school and, as such, I read as slow as a wet week so I was thinking to myself that I might just take a random sample and read a few pages here, and a few pages there.

Well, your story got me in, and yesterday I spent the whole of the 'mourning public holiday' (from about 9am to 10pm) and read the whole thing!

I wholeheartedly agree with Stephen Tiernan's words in the Foreword, "Blue Widow will make you laugh and cry and then cry again".

You've done an excellent job portraying an event that most of us can't even imagine, let alone live through. (And I'm going to claim credit as the 'Sheldo' that brought you the chicken nuggets at the hospital, if anyone asks!!)

Erika Peacock – Teacher

Strength does not come without stress, love does not come without loss. Sonya has endured more stress and suffered more loss than one should have to endure, yet through it all has shown great strength and felt immense love. Blue Widow, is more than the recount of the loss of the love of her life, Detective Senior Constable Damian Leeding. It is the true unabashed recount of a life lived, mistakes made and loves lost. It is raw, real and revealing.

Nicole Montgomery – Human Resources Consultant

A tragedy wrapped in a love story tied up with a ribbon of humour. It has me laughing, crying and swearing in equal parts. A beautiful insight into a family broken by the actions of one night.

Trudy Dalzell – Detective Sergeant

You see another tragic police story on the news, reports from the scene, pictures of the family and then what?

This is that story behind the news, that grabs you by the heart strings from the very beginning and doesn't let go throughout. It's a story of loss, grief and discovery as a police widow fights to comprehend how this could happen to her husband and how she faces the future without him. How she must learn to navigate her own personal journey after an horrific event, as a serving police officer herself, and mother of small children. It is a raw but ultimately uplifting tale of one woman's fight to forge her own identity and path when her future is suddenly ripped apart.

Karla Bauer – Director

A powerful tale about grief of a wife and mother, and her struggles to get through each day. And sadly, how she lost her identify in the workplace. This tale brought me to tears but shows how strong and resilient Sonya, supported by her family and friends, is.

Sean Montgomery – Sergeant, ADF

Our wonderful friend is releasing her biography soon. Her story in her words of a love that will last forever, the heart breaking loss and how she is living through it. I was lucky enough to read an early copy and it had me laughing at the good times and crying my eyes out at the worst of times.

Rest easy Damo, she stands strong.



Interview Questions

How/why did you start writing?

How long did it take you to write your book?

What effect has the process of writing your story had on you?

What message are you conveying by telling your story?

How did it come about that Ocean Reeve Publishing was the publisher you chose?

What has the publishing journey been like for you?

Did you have to get approval from QPS to publish your story?

Are you still a police officer?

How do you think your story will be received by others in law enforcement?

What do you want to achieve by having your story published?

Feel free to ask me, you might be surprised by my response!

Contact Sonya Blue Widow

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