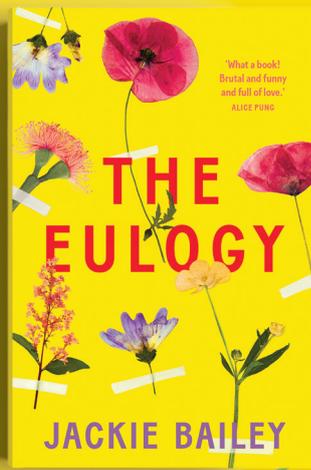


The Eulogy

Jackie Bailey



About the Book

It's winter in Logan, south-east Queensland, and still warm enough to sleep in a car at night if you have nowhere else to go. But Kathy can't sleep. Her husband is on her blocked caller list and she's running from a kidnapping charge, a Tupperware container of 300 sleeping pills in her glovebox. She has driven from Sydney to plan a funeral with her five surviving siblings (most of whom she hardly speaks to) because their sister Annie is finally, blessedly, inconceivably dead from the brain tumour she was diagnosed with twenty-five years ago, the year everything changed.

Kathy wonders – she has always wondered – did Annie get sick to protect her? And if so, from what?

In writing Annie's eulogy, Kathy attempts to understand the tangled story of the Bradley family: from their mother's childhood during the Japanese occupation of Singapore in World War Two and their father's experiences in the Malayan conflict and the Vietnam War, to Annie's cancer and disability, and the events that have shaped the person that Kathy is today. Ultimately, Kathy needs Annie to help her decide whether she will allow herself to love and be loved.

Jackie Bailey's autofiction novel is an astounding debut, deftly weaving together storylines and relationships over decades, and will stay with readers long after the last page.

About the Author

Jackie Bailey is a professional writer and researcher and a recognised international expert on cultural diversity in the arts. She runs BYP Group, often appears on arts industry panels and conferences, is a regular contributor to ArtsHub, has a Creative Writing PhD from UNSW and is on the Board of Merrigong Theatre Company. Her work has been published widely, including in the *Roots* anthology from the 2020 SBS Emerging Writers' Competition. Jackie is also an ordained interfaith minister, trained deathwalker and practising funeral director.

Questions for Discussion

1. In the prologue, Kathy mentions research about a statistically significant, graded relationship between adverse childhood experiences and cancer. This informs her question: *did her sister Annie get sick to protect Kathy?* Do you think that life events can take a serious toll on the body?
2. *The Eulogy* is structured around a fictional guide, 'How to Write a Eulogy.' What do you think are the most important elements to a eulogy and what would you like included in your own?
3. As a society, could we be more open to talking about death and dying? What would make it easier for us to discuss?
4. *The Eulogy* has been written as autofiction, which means that it is largely based on the author's life but has fictional elements. What opportunities can the writing devices of fiction bring to a story based on fact and personal experience?
5. *The Eulogy* describes the massacre of Singapore Chinese people under the Japanese occupation of World War Two, and Australian involvement in the Malayan Conflict and the Vietnam War in the 1950s to 1970s. This history had a profound impact on Jackie Bailey's family, yet she learned very little about these events at school. What is the importance of sharing stories to widen our understanding of local and global history?
6. Kathy struggles with her own internalised racism and gradually becomes aware of the casual racism within her own family when she brings home her fiancé, Evan. Have you ever had to face unpalatable truths about the prejudices from yourself and those around you? What impact has overcoming these prejudices had on your relationships?
7. The protagonist describes an arduous battle with the disability bureaucracy to obtain appropriate care for Annie, who is placed in aged care when she is not yet forty years old. The Australian Institute of Health and Welfare estimates that, as of 1 July 2018, there are around 6,000 people under 65 years of age living in aged care facilities in Australia. What sort of supports do you think should be in place for this population?
8. The core relationship in this book is between Kathy and her sister Annie. Kathy wants everyone to know that her sister lived a valuable human life and that her disability did not make her either a saint or a pariah. What do you think are the biggest issues in the way people with intellectual disability are treated in society? What can be done better?