

Hardie Grant Acquires Debut Autofiction from Jackie Bailey

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Hardie Grant Books is delighted to announce the acquisition of *The Eulogy* an astounding literary autofiction debut from new Australian voice, Jackie Bailey.

A stunning tale of family, love and loss, *The Eulogy* draws on Bailey's family's stories of intergenerational trauma. It follows Kathy as she sits down to write her sister Annie's eulogy and reflects on the complexities that shaped their family and their identities.

'I started writing *The Eulogy* almost ten years ago. I had just given birth to my daughter and knew with the certainty that comes at 3am, after a month of sleepless nights, that I had to write this story,' said Bailey. 'It was not an easy book to write. But I wanted and needed to see more stories like my family's in print.'

A professional writer and researcher, Bailey runs BYP Group and is a recognised international expert on cultural diversity in the arts. After her own sister's death and working on the manuscript Bailey enrolled in interfaith ministry, deathwalker and funeral training programs.

'I wanted to be able to give others what my sister's funeral had given me: a clean wound, a fresh healing,' said Bailey. 'Six years on, I am an ordained interfaith minister and independent funeral director. I walk with people as they pass through the liminal zone between death and what comes after. It's a space I think I have always known; a timeless place where I visit my sister.'

Bailey draws on this and her personal experiences to explore strong themes of family, faith, identity, trauma, illness and death, but even with such intensity there is a levity and lightness to her writing and memorable characters that will have Kathy, Annie and the Bradley family stay with readers.

'Jackie's debut is a bold reimagining of the great storytelling tradition – dysfunctional family reunites over a tragedy – and cleverly structured around the hardest of all writing assignments – the eulogy for a lost loved one,' said commissioning editor Emily Hart. 'I can't wait for Australia to read this beautiful story.'

Bailey wrote the first version of the manuscript as part of a creative writing PhD with UNSW, and an earlier version was shortlisted for the Kill Your Darlings Unpublished Manuscript Award 2018 and longlisted for The Wheeler Centre's Next Chapter Award 2019. She also received an Emerging Writers Development Award from Varuna National Writers House, a Writing NSW Emerging Writers Mentorship, and was recently longlisted for the inaugural Newcastle Writers Festival Fresh Ink Emerging Writers Prize.

Last year as a finalist of the 2020 SBS Emerging Writers' Competition, Bailey came to the attention of Hardie Grant Books commissioning editor Emily Hart, whilst she was working on the competition's anthology, [*Roots: Home is Who We Are: Voices from the SBS Emerging Writers' Competition*](#).

‘Working with Jackie has already been an absolute joy. She’s an incredible talent in so many ways, and everyone at Hardie Grant Books has been gripped by her writing, first in *Roots* and now in *The Eulogy*,’ said Hart.

Marshall Heald, Director of TV and Online Content at SBS, said ‘Jackie Bailey’s story was one of the outstanding entries from the 2020 SBS Emerging Writers’ Competition, and we are so pleased it not only was included in the competition anthology *Roots*, but has now been expanded into book form.’

Bailey’s *The Eulogy* is the first book from to be acquired from Hardie Grant Books’ partnership with SBS Emerging Writers Competition. ‘Hopefully it’s the first of many books to come,’ said Hart.

The Eulogy is scheduled to publish on 1 June 2022.

About *The Eulogy*:

It’s winter in Logan, south-east Queensland, which means it is still warm enough to sleep in a car at night if you have nowhere else to go. But Kathy can’t sleep. She stares out the windscreen and wonders, how did we end up here? Her husband Evan is on her blocked caller list and she is running from a kidnapping charge, an airtight Tupperware container filled with the powder of 300 sleeping pills in the glovebox. Her sister Annie is finally, blessedly, inconceivably dead from the brain tumour she had been 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? Kathy knows she failed Annie during her life, leaving her in the care of their abusive mother after their father died. The least she can do now for Annie is to remain alive long enough to give her a good funeral.

In writing Annie’s eulogy, Kathy attempts to understand the story of hers and Annie’s lives. She reconstructs their parents’ lives before they met and married, imagining her mother’s childhood during the Japanese occupation of Singapore during World War Two, and her father’s experiences in the Malayan conflict and the Vietnam War. She recounts the experiences of growing up in the Bradley family, as one of eight children. And she reflects more on her own relationships and traumas that have shaped the person that she is today.

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