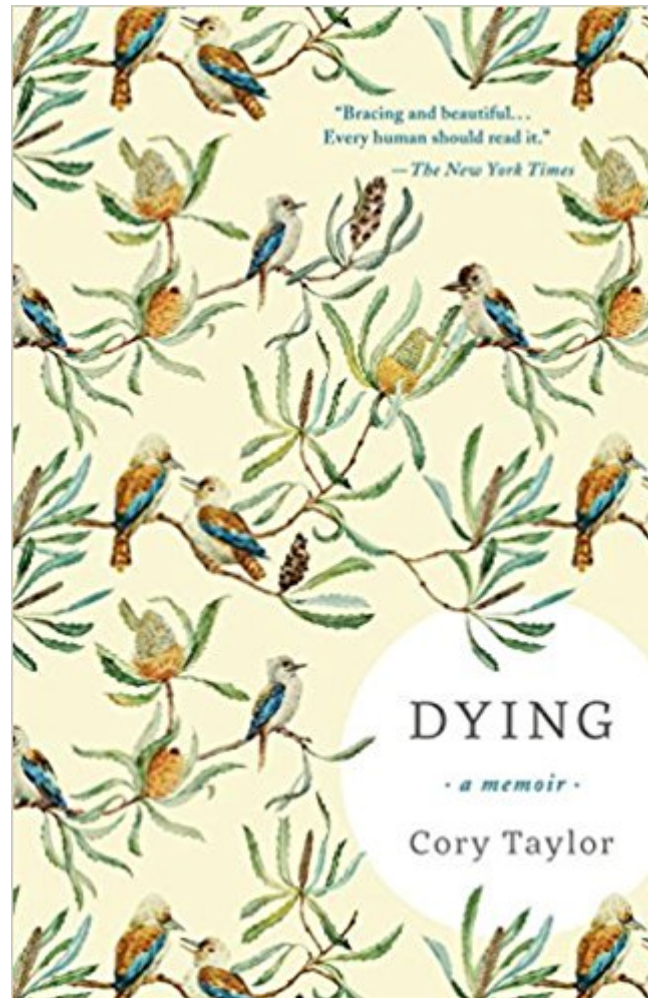




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# Dying: A Memoir



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## Synopsis

"Bracing and beautiful . . . Every human should read it." *—The New York Times*  
*Times Book Review* *—Editors' Choice*  
At the age of sixty, Cory Taylor is dying of melanoma-related brain cancer. Her illness is no longer treatable: she now weighs less than her neighbor's retriever. As her body weakens, she describes the experience of the vulnerability and strength, the courage and humility, the anger and acceptance of knowing she will soon die. Written in the space of a few weeks, in a tremendous creative surge, this powerful and beautiful memoir is a clear-eyed account of what dying teaches: Taylor describes the tangle of her feelings, remembers the lives and deaths of her parents, and examines why she would like to be able to choose the circumstances of her death. Taylor's last words offer a vocabulary for readers to speak about the most difficult thing any of us will face. And while *Dying: A Memoir* is a deeply affecting meditation on death, it is also a funny and wise tribute to life.

## Book Information

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## Customer Reviews

"Dying is bracing and beautiful, possessed of an extraordinary intellectual and moral rigor. Every medical student should read it. Every human should read it." *—Jennifer Senior, The New York Times*  
"An eloquent plea for a more humane approach to death and a moving meditation on the life that leads to that end. . . . There is an ever expanding body of literature on coming to terms with mortality, and this entry ranks with the best." *—Kirkus, Starred Review*  
"Honest, powerful, and moving . . . A deeply personal conversation about the alchemy of death, this brave memoir reveals the intimacy of the act, where 'we're like the last

survivors on a sinking ship, huddled together for warmth.' - Oprah.com "This slender volume brings a fresh point of view to end-of-life care, the concept of having a sense of control over the unknown, and the role of chance in life. This deep meditation is beautifully written and destined to be an important piece of the conversation surrounding death. Taylor's last testament to life is a welcome departing gift from a thoughtful and inspired author." - Publishers Weekly, Starred Review "If a more open discussion of death is needed in the West, Taylor's book is a manual for the task. It is full of wisdom and vulnerability; it is also profoundly reassuring. Dying, she repeatedly says, is deeply lonely. No one can do it with you. But this book might be a companion, made all the more solid by its lack of sentimentality and any other false comforts." - Times Literary Supplement "Dying is a powerful, passionate, unflinching memoir about facing death and the choices and difficulty and beauty that entails. It should be required reading for all of us." - Ann Hood "This small, powerful book offers a clean engagement with life's conclusion: with clarity and courage, the author finds words to escort us towards silence." - Hilary Mantel "Cory Taylor's book is both a precise and moving memoir about the randomness of family, and an admirable intellectual response to the randomness of life and death. We should all hope for as vivid a looking-back, and as cogent a looking-forward, when we reach the end ourselves." - Julian Barnes "This is a powerful, poignant and lucid last testament, at once an eloquent plea for autonomy in death, and an evocation of the joys, sorrows, and sheer unpredictability and precariousness of life. It's a fine contribution to our much-needed dialogue with death." - Margaret Drabble

Cory Taylor was an award-winning novelist and screenwriter who also published short fiction and children's books. Her first novel, *Me and Mr. Booker*, won the Commonwealth Writers' Prize (Pacific Region) in 2012 and her second novel, *My Beautiful Enemy*, was shortlisted for the Miles Franklin Award in 2014. She died on July 5, 2016, shortly after *Dying: A Memoir* was published in Australia.

At the age of sixty, Cory Taylor was dying of a melanoma-related brain cancer. Her cancer could no longer be treated, and death was inevitable. And so, she wrote this book. I imagine that every person who reads it comes away with something slightly different. For me, it's Cory Taylor's reflections on her life, and her observations about the deaths of her parents. So many echoes, too, in her thoughts about being able to choose the circumstances of her

death. I've lost two friends in as many years, two friends who suffered because preserving life was, apparently, more important than a comfortable death. The book is full of clear and careful reflection. At one stage, writing about the unexpected death of a friend who was helping her, Cory writes: A sudden death cuts out all of the ghastly preliminaries, but I imagine it leaves behind a terrible regret for all the things left permanently unspoken. A slow death, like mine, has that one advantage. You have a lot of time to talk, to tell people how you feel, to try to make sense of the whole thing, of the life that is coming to a close, both for yourself and those who remain. She writes of acceptance, of her ambition to be a writer. Of having no regrets, and of worrying about death: It is by far the hardest thing I've ever done, and I will be glad when it's over. And: My doctor has promised to honour my wishes, but I can't help worrying. I haven't died before, so I sometimes get a bad case of beginner's nerves, but they soon pass. It's a beautifully written book. Dying is a personal journey which, at some stage, each of us will make. It's a book on a topic we need to discuss more openly: death is inevitable, but the circumstances of death vary. People should not suffer when suffering can be avoided. Right at the end of the book, Cory Taylor writes: I've come to the edge of words now, to the place where they falter and strain in the face of dying's terrifying finality. I can only hope that Cory Taylor did not suffer. Cory Taylor died on 5 July 2016, a couple of months after this book was published. She was aged 61. I had previously read *My Beautiful Enemy*, and I've added *Me and Mr Booker* to my reading list. Jennifer Cameron-Smith

What a gem of a book. The author, playwright and novelist faces her untimely death due to melanoma in an unsentimental recording of her last thoughts of life on earth and the possibility of life hereafter. It does not drag you down into the day to day problems of the illness itself but reflects on being a little piece of the universe and what it means. Cory encounters both the problems and freedoms of not being of any religious heritage. Cory is gone but I am sure her work will endure. I have read it twice and will likely read it again.

Hate to be the downer here. The book is well written, but is, essentially, NOT a story about dying. It's an autobiography. A very proportionately small amount of the book is dedicated to what it's like to be

dealing with rapidly approaching death. It's the story of her life, from young childhood to adult. If you are looking for deep insight on the dying process, there are other books that do this better. If you want to read about someone's family dynamics and past life experiences, you might enjoy this.

What do you do if you're dying slowly of a melanoma-related brain cancer? If you're a writer, like Brisbane-based Cory Taylor, you write a book about it, and all the rest of us can do is soak in the relentlessly true, beautiful and moving words that result. Structured around three long essays, Taylor writes of how her body has failed her since the initial diagnosis in 2005, just before her 50th birthday. While her once full life has since contracted to just two rooms – her bedroom and her living room, where she spends most of her days now – her mind remains wonderfully sharp and active, and here she describes the arc of her narrative with vivid details. "When you're dying, even your unhappiest memories can induce a sort of fondness," she writes, "as if delight is not confined to the good times, but is woven through your days like a skein of gold thread." With pinpoint precision, Taylor reflects on her childhood to describe how writing and language became her consuming passions. Early classroom experiences reinforced the high value of these skills: to her, writing "suddenly seemed like the most important thing in the world to practise and master, not for its meaning that would come later but for its mystery." Tied up in all of this are the stages of denial, anger, grief and acceptance that have come to her as the cancer advances. The middle section is largely devoted to her upbringing and troubled family life, and having seen how much difficulty her parents had in their marriage, it is clear that she is grateful to have found a loving man with whom to share her remaining time. At once sad and proud, Taylor's writing in these pages is truly masterly. Readers of any age will find much to learn here. If 'Dying' is to be Cory Taylor's final public writing, as seems to be the case, it is difficult to imagine a finer note on which to close.

An amazingly eloquent narrative of a woman's life, and how she comes to face and find a sort of peace and equanimity with the inevitability of her own death - a fate all of us share, but few ever so deliberately have or take the opportunity to do.

Very interesting and moving

It is clear and wonderfully descriptive about how full life is. A very good writer, who happens to write about coming to the end of one's road.

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