From the author of
The 10pm Question

EDDY EDDY

Kate De Goldi

PRAISE FOR *EDDY, EDDY*

SHORTLISTED FOR

New Zealand Young Adult Book of the Year 2023

"Kate De Goldi's love of language and Christchurch shine through in this exquisite novel about faith, love, and loss."

—*SHORTLIST CITATION*

"A memorable story, beautifully written, rich in language, utterly convincing and satisfying, and with a cast of characters who will live long in the mind."

—*LANDFALL REVIEW* (NEW ZEALAND)

"Subtle, intense, very funny, and very sad, this is a richly layered novel written with elegance, style, and love."

—*NEWSROOM* (NEW ZEALAND)

"Eddy is a deep teenaged sigh come to life... With his love of literature and classical music, Eddy is an old soul, but tempered with the rightand normal concerns of young people: love, sex, beer, and the teenaged boy's physical inability to give voice to a feeling. Circumstances contrive to make Eddy spill the emotional beans, and there are many of them. If an eddy is an area of swirling water that forms behind an obstacle, like a boulder in a river, then this boy is that. We'll travel with him, whilst he overcomes."

—*NEWZEALAND HERALD*

PRAISE FOR *THE 10PM QUESTION*

"A perfectly crafted novel, funny, compassionate, rich in characters. Hot damn (it also has great swear words), it's good."

— *THE DAILY TELEGRAPH*

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— *THE GUARDIAN*

"… an achingly poignant, wryly comic story of early adolescence that invites comparisons to works by authors as varied as Lynne Rae Perkins, Nick Hornby and J. D. Salinger… Readers from early teens to adults will be drawn to this beautifully nuanced, unsentimental view of family life, friendship, the heroic requirements of growing up and the rewards of speaking the unspeakable out loud."

— *BOOKLIST*

"Gorgeously written, this bittersweet chronicle of family complexities is wise but never pat—a masterful meditation on anxiety and courage."

— *KIRKUS REVIEWS (STARRED REVIEW)*

For Sally Zwartz.
And in memory of Jenny & Fra,
who gave us the books and the songs.

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EDDY, EDDY

Kate De Goldi

Marley was dead: to begin with. There was no doubt whatever about that. The register of his burial was signed by the cleargyman, the clerk, the undertaker, and the chief mourner. Scrooge signed it; and Scrooge's name was good upon 'change, for anything he chose to put his hand to. Old Marley was as dead as a door-nail.

— FROM *A CHRISTMAS CAROL* BY CHARLES DICKENS

September

1

'*Marley was dead: to begin with. There was no doubt whatsoever about that.*'

Eddy's uncle got to the immortal words first. It was a quotation begging to be said that day. One of them had to say it, Eddy supposed. Brain grabbed the moment.

Funny really, since Brain was a slow thinker and mover most of the time. But he spoke the second they settled into the car. Then he shut the passenger door softly — a full stop. Brain did most things carefully, even delicately. This sometimes made Eddy itch.

Maybe he'd been waiting years to say it. Maybe, all that time ago, he'd named Marley just so he could say the line when Marley died. Only now he said it wrong.

'*No doubt what*ever,' said Eddy. Really, for a research librarian, Brain could be surprisingly imprecise. He often fluffed song lyrics and quotes. 'No "so".'

'Are you sure?'

'Positive.'

Brain looked at Eddy: his baffled-animal look, the raccoon eyebrows bending inward. He seemed to be staring

at Eddy's forehead as if trying to make out the words, etched there or something, proof.

'*Marley was dead*:' Eddy paused.

'Colon,' said Brain, with a wan smile.

'*Marley was dead colon: to begin with. There was no doubt what*ever *about that*.'

There really wasn't any doubt. Marley was in the back seat, head resting on her old pillow with its stains and holes and sprouting kapok. She was wrapped in the Kaiapoi Pure Wool blanket. The blanket was Eddy's sole inheritance from his unknown maternal grandmother. He'd donated it to Marley when she was a pup and it had been her bed rug for as long as anyone could remember. It was all felted up from years of washing, spattered with ragged holes from Marley's unclipped claws. She liked to rough up the rug before she slept; she pawed at it, bunched it into little hillocks then thumped down onto it exhaling noisily, her long nose between front paws.

'Memories of snow,' Brain told Eddy all those years ago. 'The reptilian brain remembering Labrador — you know, all the snow, how they paw up the snow for warmth.

'Labrador. Where Labs come from,' said Brain, unnecessarily. Every moment a teaching moment. Labrador habits. Dreamtime lore. The Jesuits' misdeeds in China. Lines of poetry — misquoted probably, now that Eddy thought about it. The arguments for and against veganism. The meaning of thanatology . . . It had been all right when he was young, Eddy supposed. He couldn't stand it these days.

Marley's old rug would go with her now, into the ground beneath the wattle in the backyard, where she had lain in the shade all the hot afternoons of Eddy's life.

He'd already prepared the hole, spent half the morning marking out the plot and digging, manufacturing a decent sweat. It was sweltering by 11 a.m., a breathless, pressing heat, though it was only September. Eddy had derived a grim enjoyment from the liquid gathering under his cap, leaking unpleasantly down his neck and back. He imagined it glistening in the sun, a moist and manly rebuke to Brain. One of them was practical, the sweat said. *One* of them had borrowed the spade from next door and prepared the grave.

Not that Brain had been watching. He was inside with Marley, contemplating the animal soul. Saying a prayer, no doubt.

In the car now Brain still stared, dwelling on the quotation, listening to it in his head. Everything in Brain's head happened at adagio.

'*Marley was dead: to begin with*,' he said again. '*There was no doubt what*ever *about that*.'

Eddy had been there at the death. Brain too, but only Eddy watched. Brain laid a big white hand on Marley's flank but stared fixedly at the poster on the otherwise bare clinic wall: an image of a gadfly petrel, aslant against a blue sky.

Eddy held Marley's shabby left forepaw. It had given her gyp for years; she couldn't manage a run longer than three ks without developing a limp — a Marley limp,

graceful and apologetic. He massaged the furless patch on the side of the paw with his thumb. He watched Marley's face, the grizzled muzzle all slack now, her lovely eyes gummy with sickness.

At the same time, from the corner of his eye, he watched the vet expertly filling the syringe.

'It's very quick,' the vet said. 'And completely painless.' Eddy doubted the vet knew this for sure, not being a dog. It was Fat Vet. He was in practice with his brother Thin Vet: Fat Bob and Thin Tim.

Yeah, but shut up, Fat Vet, Eddy thought. Don't talk.

He liked Fat Vet well enough. He liked him much better than Thin Vet, who was terse and kind of bitter. But Eddy didn't want Fat Vet talking, not while Marley was getting the needle. He wanted it just to be Marley's sounds, her little snuffles and wheezy exhalations, the occasional tail thwomp, pathetically tired. He wanted to hear her breathing right to the end.

Fat Vet obliged. He said nothing more. He felt around with his competent sausage fingers for the soft gap in Marley's neck and slid the needle neatly into the cavity, and Marley was as dead as a door-nail. In less than a minute. No doubt whatever.

'Except,' said Eddy now, 'it isn't "to begin" with. It's the end. The end of an era. The Marley Era. Marley was dead. Full stop. The End.'

He started the car and pulled out into the road, pitted and hummocky like so many of the roads in the area; even

at normal speed the going was bumpy. Today the traffic ambled, befuddled by the heat. The air was hazy, filled with spores. This city is comatose, thought Eddy. He imagined flooring it, frightening all the dozy motorists, driving somewhere at great speed. He pictured the long straight roads north of town, the magical vanishing point. But really, you couldn't floor a Suzuki Alto with any conviction.

'Marley was dead to end with,' said Brain, trying it out.

Eddy felt the familiar spike of irritation with his duffer uncle, with Brain's over-deliberate enunciation, his ponderous — as he called them — *cerebrations*. He felt the evil little urge that visited him sometimes, to pinch Brain some place painful.

'To begin with is better,' said Brain, oblivious. 'God closes a door, opens a window.'

If he closed his eyes, thought Eddy, they might end up in the river, sink into the silted-up bottom, let the water close over the Suzuki Alto, their banana-coloured coffin, Amen, Amen.

'*Lift up your heads, oh ye gates!*' sang Brain through the windscreen, into the suburban middle-distance.

2

The month of Marley's death was the two-year anniversary of the first earthquake. Which meant it was exactly two years since the death of Brain's mother. She had probably

died during the long shaking, though no one could say for sure. Bad heart. They had found Doris in her narrow bed when they went around to check on her, an hour after the quake. Could have gone at any time, the doctor said. It might have been the quake.

'Frightened to death,' said Brain mournfully, but Eddy doubted it. Doris was quite the termagant. Mostly, people were frightened of her. He had frequently witnessed her admonishing tradies and shop assistants, hapless passers-by. In church she recited the prayers at an uncomfortable volume, in competition with the rest of the congregation. Once, she had barked out her disagreement during the sermon. Heads had turned, but the priest ploughed serenely on, used to Doris, no doubt. Eddy, ten years old at the time, had gone hot and horrified. He refused ever to accompany his grandmother to Mass again.

This weekend, Brain had arranged for the Modern Priest to say an anniversary Mass for the repose of Doris's seized-up little soul. In their living room, on a Saturday evening. The Modern Priest loved a house Mass; he grieved for the 1970s when everyone and their aunt apparently took up home-style worship.

'Count me out,' said Eddy, even as he automatically helped Brain push the couch across the room to make space for the temporary altar trestle. Eddy had not been to a church since the quakes and before that he'd gone solely to sing in the Cathedral choir. The choir loft was sufficiently far away from the priest and the progress of the Mass to

make it feel you were uninvolved, practically elsewhere, which suited Eddy fine.

He'd finally let his friend Thomas More talk him into the choir. Thos More was an inconsistent theist, but he had unshakeable faith in music of all kinds and the glory of voices raised in chorus. Eddy had resisted joining because Brain was the deputy choir master, but Thos More worked on him, wore him down like a faltering surface under a power drill.

In fact, Eddy loved singing just as much as Thos. He loved singing *with* Thos. They'd been in every school choir together since primary school, had formed countless short-lived bands, all with satisfyingly abstruse names. Their last band (Steal Away) had been barely a band: just the two of them, harmonising Thos More's increasingly strange secular spirituals: Thos liked a paradox.

'Ginge will be here,' said Brain. He smoothed the woven table runner carefully across the table top.

Eddy was very fond of cousin Ginge, a bachelor like Brain, with a houseful of cats (last count, six) instead of a nephew. Cat-love on Ginge's scale was possibly pathological but Eddy approved of it: if not for Ginge's interventions, the moggies were destined for the prick in the paw. Ginge was a union organiser and sometimes as dufferish as Brain, but he was a committed communist, and very droll. Also an atheist, though — more paradox — he went often to Mass: in his ancient army coat and Doc Martens — for old times' sake, he said. If you considered Brain and Ginge with a

cool eye you could not fail to conclude that the Smallbone genetic make-up was peculiar. And coming to an end. Any reproductive glory was up to Eddy.

'Bridgie's coming too,' said Brain. He placed the pottery candlesticks at either end of the trestle. Next, he would get the oval Temuka pottery bowl for a makeshift chalice. Eddy just knew Brain was imagining himself as an early Christian preparing for the Eucharist in a Roman atrium.

Well, Bridgie. Bridgie was wild. She was Eddy's godmother, though she believed neither in God nor mothering. She taught piano and viola and played in the symphony orchestra, had in fact played in two of his and Thos More's five-minute bands. Bridgie dressed extravagantly and pursued a dangerous line in conversation. She sometimes enquired after Ginge and Brain's peckers: had they shrivelled and fallen off yet, due to long-term lack of use?

The quartet's friendship was a mystery to Eddy, but they went way back. Back through the mists of time to Our Lady of Perpetual Succour, their hallowed primary school where fragrant and beautiful nuns had cast an unfathomable spell, and when the Modern Priest (chief altar boy) had answered to the name Christopher Mangan. They had all regularly played at Masses in Chris Mangan's bedroom, and in Eddy's view, they were playing still.

'*When I was a child, I spake as a child*,' said Eddy, watching Brain fold the lily-white table napkin he kept especially as a purificator to wash out the pottery chalice. Brain was

pretending he hadn't heard.

'*But when I became a man, I put* away *childish things*.'

'King James?' said Brain.

Eddy pretended he hadn't heard. They sometimes did this. It was 1.50 p.m. He had a pick-up in forty minutes.

'I'm off,' he said.

3

He walked to Paparoa Street, a zigzag route that dodged the worst of St Albans' chewed-up footpaths. He had a bike, but lately a disturbing thing happened whenever he swung his leg over. Slowly, terribly, he felt himself turning into Brain. He felt his arse spread and his fingers plump up. His scalp itched as his hairline seemed to recede. The pedals moved as if through porridge. He could have cycled naked but still it would have felt like he was wearing a navy blazer, wheat-coloured corduroys and polished brogues.

This sort of horror had happened at intervals throughout his adolescence, especially once his voice had broken and settled in the same baritone range as Brain's. Eddy had been violently alarmed by the first of these episodes, bursting from Thos More's sleekly appointed sleep-out into a cold June night, his breaths short and his scalp prickling on the inside.

Wtf? said Thos More by way of his eyebrow, when Eddy finally came back inside. Had he sounded like Brain?

asked Eddy. Thos thought about it. 'No more than usual,' he concluded. Eddy was appalled. 'It's the vocabulary,' said Thos. 'How many fourteen-year-olds say *concatenation*? And, you know, the *sound* — same timbre as Brain's.' Thanks for nothing, thought Eddy. And btw, how many fourteen-year-olds said *timbre*?

He'd tried to keep watch on vocabulary after that, suppressing Brain-type words. Interstices. Adumbrate. Desuetude. He would lead a two-syllable life. He tried to speak in less well-formed sentences, too, use a basser voice. It was hopeless, of course. He'd been a sitting duck: fourteen years with Brain was a full-scale colonisation. He would never escape his uncle's words, his grammar and tone, his *cerebrations*. Occasionally Brain's voice even narrated passages inside his head while he was reading. Did this happen to everyone at some stage — their parents or caregivers taking up passive-aggressive occupation inside them, a desperate stakeout just before their offspring left forever?

Not that Eddy was leaving any time soon. The quakes had seen to that. The city's housing stock was gutted. Rentals were thin on the ground or beyond his pocket. But also, in his many interior fantasies of Moving Day, there appeared always a reduced and stoical Brain helping him lug furniture, pressing household linen and appliances on him, waving a brave farewell from the front porch. Eddy couldn't do it to him. He might just have done it while Marley was still alive — he could have

trusted Brain to Marley's care. But that ship had sailed.

As it was, on most days they were both engaged in elaborate delaying tactics re arrival home from their respective jobs. It was the silence that came down the path to greet you, the lack of hustle and operatic whimpering. And being alone in the house. Nothing, nowhere, felt as it should. No dribbling dog-love when Eddy slumped on the couch. No slavish companion padding alongside him down the hallway or curled like a conch beside his bed. He didn't like going to the fridge or the pantry, the dog roll and the half-full bag of Eukanuba staring back at him, all sad and unemployed. He meant to take them next door for Pluto the Maltese but somehow never got round to it.

Brain, for his part, had suddenly organised extra choir rehearsals. He'd dreamed up new parish good-works: taking Communion to the elderly, writing material for the parish bulletin, visiting lonely parishioners. Dusting the Bishop's mitre, for all Eddy knew. They were in a figurative slow-bike race: seeing who could be last to the home finish line and claim victory. He couldn't leave Brain to the ghost of Marley and the accusing dog roll. It was infuriating.

Which was why he made his way now to Paparoa Street, where a new entry in his portfolio of pet-minding jobs awaited him. So far he had four dogs (walking), two cats (feeding while owners away), and a shifting miscellany of tropical fish, guinea pigs and budgies, also Rhode Island Red hens who were prodigious layers. The best way to

continue living with Brain, Eddy had concluded, was to live with him as little as possible. Evening and weekend employment was essential.

He'd moved through a number of jobs since leaving school two months before the first quake. In the dizzying days after his abrupt departure he'd signed on as a builder's labourer. His grandmother had been infinitely sardonic.

'From cloth cap to cloth cap in four generations,' said Doris. She seemed almost pleased, as if Eddy had proved some private thesis. But his grandmother had always been grudging about him — ungrateful, Eddy thought: he was her only grandchild, after all. It was because he'd been born out of wedlock, an antique notion to which Doris still subscribed. Sometimes, Eddy thought he could see the word *bastard* shimmering above his grandmother's head, a malign aura, emanating toxins. It was hardly his fault. If anything, it was *her* fault. She was the one who'd reared a feckless son.

Eddy's great-grandfather had been a railway labourer and his grandfather a doctor, a socially upward leap in Doris's eyes. Brain's job — librarian — was something of a comedown. Jobbing builder's boy was beneath contempt. Except Eddy'd had the last laugh, hadn't he? Because now there were building sites all over the city and every man and his dog wanting a job on them. It was the new gold rush.

Except, really, he hadn't had the last laugh because he'd broken his foot six months after the February quake

and the delicate bud that was his building career had withered and died. A shame, because hefting four-by-twos, sawhorses and bags of tools — really his building career was just lifting, carting and digging — had provoked some embryonic upper body muscles.

On the other hand, though the sudden release from uniforms, timetables, earnest teachers and the need to memorise myriad facts had been initially thrilling, by the time the June quake rolled round, ha, Eddy had begun to feel that builder's labouring was not for him. It was interesting only up to a point. He wasn't really *making* anything. This had been his pitch to Brain — the pleasure of seeing something solid, something *material*, come into being, he'd said. What had he been thinking? He hadn't of course. He'd become allergic to thinking. Thinking made him *sick*, he told Brain, he was sick of reading, writing, researching and regurgitating. He was sick of being inside his head, being a swot and a nerd.

No, he wasn't making anything, or rather *he* wasn't making anything. Cullen & Kelleher Homes was doing the making — and pretty ordinary it was too. If anything, he was unmaking, Eddy thought. Digging holes, for instance, that was an absence of something, a pit, an abyss. He wound himself into a bitter little state every so often dwelling on this. Clearly labouring didn't completely obviate thinking. Plus, it was tiring — no, exhausting. He was mostly too whacked to go out at night and when he did, he regretted it the next morning, rising in the dark at 5 a.m. He loathed

the alarm.

It was exhaustion that made him break his foot: exhaustion and Thos More's effete boots. He'd worn them home after a night in the sleep-out composing an anti-disaster-capitalist rant, 'Eat my Aggregates', which Thos was planning to perform outside the CERA offices, if he could ever make it out of bed. The boots were too narrow for Eddy's feet, which meant that when he climbed the gate at Snorebins Park's east exit and dropped as carefully as possible to the ground, the left boot rolled disastrously and somehow this had broken two metatarsals. He was laid up for a week with a monstrously swollen foot, the pain throbbing throughout his body, and only a pile of Brain's Inspector Wexford novels to divert him. He read them helplessly, one after another, and was brought very low by this further evidence of Brain-creep.

Thereafter he'd hobbled about with crutches, then crutchless but jobless, then finally with just an imperceptible favouring of his right foot. Occasionally a twinge still surprised him if he encountered a treacherous footpath eruption.

Doris would have cared little for his broken foot — she had been a famously heartless nurse, heedless of anyone's sore stomachs or headaches. 'Go to the toilet,' she said, in answer to every complaint.

'She was forged in different times,' said Brain.

And actually out of iron, thought Eddy. He learned to shut up.

‘Doris was born crabby,’ Bridgie told him once. ‘And then there was Vincent.’

Well, Eddy conceded, a dead drug addict son was a bummer for sure.

4

Paparoa Street had done okay in the quakes, Eddy thought. He assessed all parts of the city in this way: Avonhead, scot-free; Papanui, surface wounds; St Albans, broken limbs; Dallington, six feet under.

Paparoa Street was bungalowed, big-sectioned, abundantly gardened, deciduously treed; high-sided trampolines and swing-sets ubiquitous. Number 62 was two-storeyed, the wood exterior pristine white. The job was for a Josie Mulholland. They had two dogs, she’d emailed, a spoodle (of course, the dog du jour) and a golden retriever. Thank God. A retriever offered some gravitas amid his doodle-dominated charges: thus far, two spoodles, a cavoodle, and a completely insane chipoo with overactive tear glands. He had turned down a peekapoo, ostensibly because its owners lived outside the parameters he’d determined — no more than five ks in each direction from home — but really, it was one ridiculous cross-breed too many. He was hanging out for something noble: a border collie, a boxer, a standard poodle. Even a German shepherd. No Labs though. Or

not yet. Eddy felt a terrible ache around the heart each time he saw one — which was often; since Marley's death the suburbs seemed riddled with Labradors.

He couldn't imagine having another dog himself. A replace-ment companion. Some people acquired new pets with impunity — his old friend Ollie, for instance. That family's pooches were always getting run over, or poisoned, or falling prey to bizarre medical conditions. But Ollie and his brothers shed their dog attachments with ease. They found new puppies speedily, like necessary household items, a kettle or toilet seat, and life went on as usual. Until the new dog met its inevitable end, providing more compost for their vegetable garden and the chance for a bit of a ceremony. Eddy had attended at least three dog funerals in Ollie's backyard.

These pet care jobs — when did a cluster of jobs become an actual business? — they filled an emotional hole. He was dog-adjacent but not fully involved. Hands on but no strings. Was this how early childhood carers felt? Or teachers? He could certainly do with the kind of variety a nursery of children provided. At the moment it felt like he was in charge of a dispersed multiple birth — all skittish and hairy. Bring on the retriever.

It was 2.30 p.m. Eddy pressed Josie Mulholland's doorbell.

The Mulhollands' house was large. Its décor would be the opulent sort he knew from his ex-girlfriend Hazel and her friends' houses on the west side of town. Marble benches,

leather sofas that sucked at your skin, vast beds with oppressive numbers of pillows and cushions, everything conspicuously clean, tucked up and tidy.

The boy who'd answered the door was conspicuously unclean. He wore ancient jeans and a manky, spattered hoodie. Sparse hair sprouted hopefully from his chin. He was barefoot and sizeable and said nothing. A wave of fruity sweat met Eddy.

'Eddy,' he said, stepping back. 'To see Josie about the dogs.'

'She's out.' The boy looked past Eddy, his face expressionless. Eddy turned to see what was behind him. Nothing.

'You can just take them,' the boy said. He turned and lumbered down the hallway. A *big* lad, as Ginge would say. Eddy followed, feeling slight and tubercular, as he always did around substantial people.

'In there,' said the boy, pointing to a door. He pushed through another door and was gone.

In there was a kind of conservatory, Eddy supposed, sun-filled and awash with shiny-leaved plants. A girl dressed in white sat in a rocker, a dog in her lap, another by the side of the chair. He was suddenly in a Tennessee Williams play. But then the dogs rushed him (undisciplined!) and it was the inevitable first meeting mêlée. He gave them the love, of course. Oh, the old doggo slavering, it never disappointed; even if you didn't know the dogs, out went your hands involuntarily and back came their

paws and tongues, the snuffling, the trembling bodies. It was another language, and he was fluent. You stayed patient and attentive and their frenzy eventually settled, the sniff test sorted on both sides.

'I've been trying to train them,' said the girl. 'But it's not working. We went to a class, but Dad hated it.' She was young — nine, ten? He could never tell kids' ages. Was she wearing an enormous nightie? Stick arms and legs poked from it like a scarecrow's. Her hair was like straw.

'Don't you mind?' she said, watching the maul.

'Love it,' said Eddy.

The spoodle was mental, wanting full lip kisses already. 'Hey you! Not on the first date.'

She giggled. 'Rizzo's needy.'

'What's this one called?' The retriever sat now, earnest and aquiver. Eddy gave him an approving pat.

'Waffle.'

'Because?'

She sighed. 'He's kind of *toasted* like waffles. I was only four when we got him. I'd probably call him something different now. Like Henry or Toby. A proper dog's name. My dad had a German shepherd once called Norman.'

Clearly the talker of the family.

'We got Waffle from the pound. He had a terrible life. But Rizzo was from a dog breeder. Two thousand dollars Dad'll never see again. That's what he said. She was my present for sleeping in my own bed for a month.'

And where did they get you? wondered Eddy.

'I'm Delphine,' she said.

'Eddy.' He held Rizzo firmly away from his face, waited for her to slacken.

'I know. Eddy *Smallbone*. And you're a dog walker.'

'Amazing no one's made that joke before.'

'That was my brother who answered the door. He h ates doing it, but I'm not allowed. In case of kidnapping. I'm not making that up. Dad says it could happen to anyone.'

Pity the kidnapper, thought Eddy. She was like a brat-sprite, precocious and invasive, all angles and ghostly skin and a high insistent voice.

He gave in to Rizzo then, tired of disciplining. He knelt properly and her nose went straight into his crotch. Delphine looked at him askew.

'In case you're wondering,' she said, 'I have a wandering eye.'

'All good.'

She rocked a little in the chair, looking at his ear. 'Sometimes I have double vision. I could see two of you.'

'Twice as much fun,' said Eddy.

'Our last walker was a failure. He lost Rizzo; he was a student. We had to make signs and put them on lampposts. It was three days before we got her back.'

Eddy stood, looking for the leashes.

'Is dog walking your actual *job*?' said Delphine, pitching forward, holding the rocking chair in place with her bare feet.

'Mum said you walk lots of dogs. She found out about you from her friend Erica. She's got a spoodle too, but she calls it a cockapoo? She used to have a Maltipoo. Two *poos*.' She laughed maniacally. 'Did you know there's a designer dog called a whoodle?'

In fact, Eddy did know this, having been driven to doodle sites on learning there was a breed as risible as a chipoo. But he'd had enough of Delphine. He took the leads from the arm of an overstuffed chair.

'Well, *is* dog walking your job?' She rocked herself up and out of the chair.

'It's one of them,' said Eddy.

'What are the others?'

'Gravedigging and dentistry.'

She stared at him, the eye roaming. 'Can you tell me about the gravedigging?'

'No,' said Eddy, clipping a lead to Rizzo's collar. Waffle stood to attention. Good boy. Sorry about the name.

'Mum says they need a long one and there are poo bags in the kitchen drawer. They're compostable.' She trailed Eddy from the room.

'I wish I could come. I used to go with Dad, but he's shifted out now. But I'm having a nightie day because I didn't go to school. Do you have those? Or a pyjama day?'

'No,' said Eddy. He never wore pyjamas. Brain wore pyjamas. Pale blue striped ones from Ballantynes, bought every three years since the Bronze Age.

'Mum's at the gym. And Jasper never goes out if he can

help it. Except sometimes at night. Like a bat.'

'What about school?' He opened the front door.

'Correspondence,' she said, looking up at his face, more or less.

'I'll be about an hour,' said Eddy.

'Mum said she'd be back.'

He felt her eyes as he went down the path, drilling a hole in his spine, or thereabouts.

'Careful,' he called. 'Kidnappers!'

The door slammed and the dogs pulled him through the front gate.

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Kate De Goldi grew up in Christchurch, New Zealand, and has published short stories and novels for both adults and children. Her novel *The 10pm Question* won the New Zealand Post Book of the Year in 2009 in both YA and General Fiction categories, was selected as a White Ravens Outstanding New International Book for Children and Young Adults and was longlisted for the Dublin Literary Award. Rave reviews highlighted its wit and empathy for Frankie, its tortured teen protagonist. *Eddy, Eddy* once again explores the mind of a teenager struggling to come to terms with trauma and loss. It is informed by De Goldi's extensive work teaching creative writing to young people and reviewing and lecturing on all things literary, and the time she spent in Christchurch following the devastating earthquake there in 2011.

CHRISTCHURCH, NEW ZEALAND, 2012

—two years since the first earthquake.

Eddy Smallbone is grappling with identity, love, loss and religion. It's two years since he blew up his school life and the earthquakes felled his city. Home life is maddening. His pet-minding job is expanding in peculiar directions. And now the past and the future have come calling – in unexpected form.

Slowly, Eddy picks his way through the chaos of his post-natural-disaster life, juggling competing responsibilities and an increasingly noisy interior world. As Christmas approaches he, like Dickens' Ebenezer Scrooge, moves closer and closer to an overdue personal reckoning.

Kate De Goldi's heartfelt and humorous exploration of sorrow and healing displays all the empathy and linguistic dexterity that have made her one of New Zealand's best contemporary authors.

"Intense, funny, shocking and exuberant, *Eddy, Eddy* is a brilliant, rich and effervescent novel about the myriad ways - sometimes right and sometimes dazzlingly wrong - that we find to save ourselves, when, like Eddy, the plates shift underneath our feet and the chasm opens."
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