



FICTION

Dying for Cake

Louise Limerick

Pan \$22

Reviewer **Lorien Kaye**

Whatever her detractors might have said, Oprah did often choose some truly good books as her book club selections. Since the demise of the club, her many fans (mostly women) have had to look elsewhere for guidance, and a flood of alternative book clubs has rushed to fill the gap. Hence the shiny gold sticker on Brisbane author Louise Limerick's first novel proclaiming "Women's Weekly Great Read". And it's true. For women, especially mothers, looking for something that doesn't tax their intelligence but doesn't insult it either, *Dying for Cake* is, indeed, a great read.

"Great", here, doesn't mean literary masterpiece. It means a thoroughly diverting book that plunges us wholeheartedly into the lives of its five characters: all moth-

ers of young children, but all different from one another. One of them, Evelyn, has "imploded" after the disappearance of her baby daughter, and the other four women sense that Evelyn was somehow involved. Each responds to the mystery differently, but in relation to her own experience of motherhood.

This is very much a woman's novel. The male characters lurk like shadows in the background, a minor fault in a book that otherwise works very well. Limerick is able to give credible voices to five characters, and her depictions of the minutiae of raising children are lovingly realistic but not overly sentimental. Without being heavy-handed, this novel is essentially about the validity of different ways of mothering, and the importance of self-fulfilment for women, however that is gained.

