

**JAY CARMICHAEL**

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DEAR BOOK CLUBBERS,

Perhaps like all stories, what you're reading is not what I intended to write.

Why the 1950s? Why Morgan and Christopher?

I don't have firm answers except that some elements in this book appeared unannounced and sometimes uninvited. That's not to say this book is an accident. I made very deliberate decisions about what to do once these elements became known.

*Marlo* would not be in your hands if not for several friendships and collaborations. I cannot emphasise enough the contributions from Peter Waples-Crowe and Dino Hodge: their voices, ideas, and feedback have shaped this work from its inception. Along with the Australian Queer Archives, I was fortunate and grateful for the wealth of knowledge they passed on to me.

You may read the 'Author's note' at the end of *Marlo* to learn more about how society and culture regarded and treated men who had relationships with men in the 1950s. As I discovered more about this period, one thought stuck: surely two men could experience love and connection despite society and the law.

So, who were these men?

I see the relationship between Christopher and Morgan as a pas de deux choreographed by big ideas and unnamed emotions. I see the way they individually respond as a series of small acts of defiance, of privacy, of assertion. They each seek to stake a claim — for each other and, ultimately, for themselves: to be seen, to be heard, to be understood.

Surely Morgan and Christopher could have experienced 'normal' life — that life we see lived by Kings and Dotty — despite the city they were living in, despite the laws of both the state and the country they were living in.

If anything, the version of *Marlo* you are reading is an attestation that a man such as Morgan and a man such as Christopher could have existed in the history of our country.

I hope you enjoy getting to know them.

Affably,

Jay Carmichael

### QUESTIONS

Consider the extract from the Crimes Act 1949 that opens *Marlo*. Discuss how this law may be interpreted and affect someone's day to day life.

The characters in *Marlo* have different backgrounds — such as ancestry, gender, and past relationships. In the context of the 1950s, how might your background have affected your life and the opportunities you had access to?

Discuss how our present-day social attitudes and laws enable and/or continue to restrict people's freedom to be themselves.

What might be the importance of the images, news articles, and letters?

What are the limits of devotion in a world that denies your love?

For Christopher, how is being in 'the City' different to being in the country? Is there any difference?

# Here are two recipes so you can enjoy a meal just as Morgan made for Christopher.

## ICED TEA

Makes two 250mL iced teas

### INGREDIENTS

- 4 teaspoons loose-leaf tea
- 500mL boiling water
- ½ cup orange juice
- 1 tablespoon lemon juice
- 3–4 teaspoons sugar
- ¾ cup crushed ice

### METHOD

1. Pour boiling water over tea leaves. Steep for 5 minutes.
  2. Meanwhile, in a serving jug, add ice, sugar, lemon juice, and orange juice. Add alcohol if using (see note below).
  3. Strain tea. Pour into serving jug and stir until sugar dissolves. Chill.
  4. Serve over ice in a highball glass with a twist of orange and lemon peel.
- Alcoholic version: to make a modern iced tea cocktail, brew Earl Grey tea instead and add 2 standard shots of dry gin to the serving jug.

\*Adapted from Australian Women's Weekly, 9 November 1955



# BAKED MURRAY COD

Serves two people

## INGREDIENTS

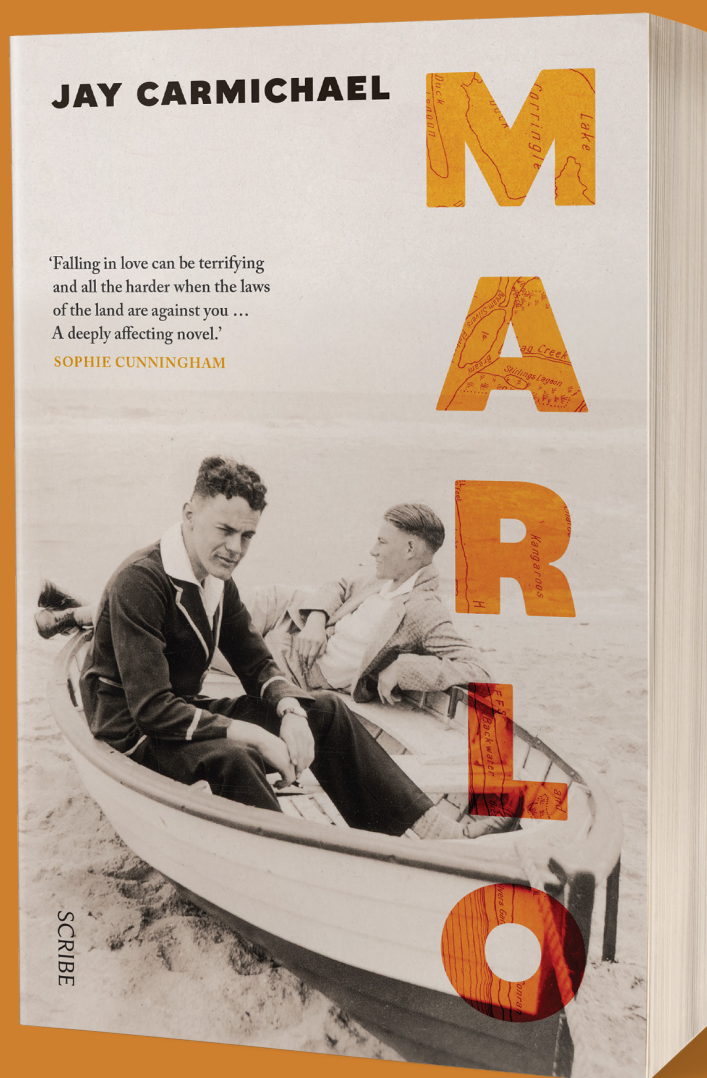
- 1 whole Murray cod, gutted and gilled (approx. 500g)
  - Salt and pepper
  - Butter
  - Olive oil
- Grated zest and juice from 1 lemon
- Grated zest and juice from 1 orange
- Fresh thyme, enough to fill the cavity of the Murray cod — make sure you use the stems and all
  - 1 cup dry white wine

## METHOD

1. Preheat oven to 200°C.
2. Lightly brush aluminium foil with butter. Lay foil into an oven-proof baking dish big enough to hold the cod. Lay cod on top of this piece of foil.
3. Pour lemon and orange juice over thyme stalks. Fill the cavity of the Murray cod with the thyme, making sure to tip the remaining juice into the cavity as well.
4. Pour wine over the cod. Drizzle with olive oil. Sprinkle over the citrus zest, salt, and pepper. Loosely wrap the foil around the fish. Seal well.
5. Bake in oven for 15–20 minutes, or barbecue grill until fish is cooked (depending on size).
6. Unwrap fish and serve with vegetables or salad of choice.

\*Adapted from Australian Women's Weekly, 18 March 1953

**Jay Carmichael** is a writer and editor whose first novel, *Ironbark*, was shortlisted for the Victorian Premier's Literary Award for Fiction in 2019, and whose writing has been published by Beyond Blue and appeared widely in print and online, including in *Overland*, *The Guardian*, SBS, and *The Telling Tree* project. Jay lives and works in Melbourne.



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