

How does the Me Generation deal with life-threatening catastrophe? We find out when *Sydney Morning Herald* columnist Ruth Ritchie’s high-achieving advertising executive partner Jhonnie Blampied has a spectacular bicycle accident that puts him in a coma for some days, leaving him with a brain injury taking two years to overcome.

Ritchie dedicates herself totally to Jhonnie’s recovery, but the qualities of tolerance and patience are not in her repertoire. Anyone who helps on her own terms – her own family and friends – is angelic, while the rest of the world – his family and ex-wife – are moronic devils. Ritchie’s tongue is not sharp so much as a blunt instrument. ‘You don’t get off the fucking hook with sorry, you amoebic piece of shit,’ she tells Jhonnie’s hapless brother over the international phone lines. Meanwhile, the emails she sends to Jhonnie’s wellwishers often verge on the maudlin. Food is important in a crisis, but she is a foodie of the most determined order and unless she cooks expensive gourmet meals every night life will lose all meaning. *Waterlemon* is honest and forthright but also disturbing: the in-your-face style of the weekly column seems tasteless and boastful in a memoir like this.