

FREE  
SAMPLE

Life's Not

Yoga

or is it...?

Finding Love

in the

Chaos

of Life



Jacqui Burnett

Born into a perfect family, by 16, Jacqui Burnett wants to kill her father. With his gun.

Decades later Jacqui believes she has left her turbulent past and the trauma of eight near-death experiences behind her. On the surface, she has everything she's ever dreamed of – an education, success and a wonderful husband. What Jacqui doesn't know is that she's about to lose everything.

*'I was about to step into a board meeting but instead I slid from my office chair and cowered under my desk, sobbing. As managing director, I was meant to announce a year of outstanding results; instead, I was paralysed.'*

In a desperate search for answers, Jacqui travels to America. Alone in the Rocky Mountains, her life starts unravelling and the truth of her chaotic childhood begins to emerge.

In her confused attempts to find love and meaning, Jacqui has to face death one more time, along with an avalanche of unexpected obstacles, before rising from the ashes to heal.

There really is nothing more painful in life than heartbreak. We all go through it at one point or another. But the beauty of heartbreak is that these moments have the power to transform us. Whether it's a sudden break-up or losing your job unexpectedly, they happen for reasons we'll never know. And they will keep happening over, and over, and over again, until we have the balls to stand up for ourselves and make a change.

LIFE'S NOT YOGA: Or is It? . . . Finding Love in the Chaos of Life by Jacqui Burnett is a beautiful, raw, love, life, inspirational, transformational tale of human spirit less a memoir than a reflection on life and purpose.

A great, indelible book ... as intimate and illuminating as Jacqui Burnett's life. This book has exceptionally wide appeal ... I guarantee that finishing this book and then forgetting about it is simply not an option ... gripping from the start ... None of it is maudlin. Nothing is exaggerated.

The power of this book lies in its eloquent insistence that we are all confronting tough times every day, whether we know it or not. The real question we face, is not how long, but rather how we will live – and the answer does not appear in any textbook.

Done reading, I am leaving this book on my shelf, nestled between Viktor Frankl's magnum opus 'Man's Search for Meaning' and Anne Frank's 'The Diary of A Young Girl', because I really feel that this book deserves its place up there!

*Ishika Bookish - The Reviewer*

Brilliant!  
I could not put this book down. What a read!  
*Mrs N. Price*

It's Jacqui's engagingly frank voice and fierce self-enquiry that drives this fast-paced gripping tale through all its spirited twists and turns.  
*Nina Geraghty*

An incredibly inspiring memoir. Fasten your seatbelt!  
It challenged me in a lot of ways that I have not thought about before.  
I highly recommend it.  
*Richman Bongani Mahlangu*

A raw and honest account of disappointment, deceit and much heart-ache to an inspiring transformation of forgiveness and pure love. It's a book you stay up late for as you can't put it down. It's Brilliant!  
*Belinda Dunger*

Brave and brutally honest. Set aside some time. You'll want to read this in one sitting. A journey of discovery. Life and love.  
Always good to start with self.  
*Louise Kerby*

This book took so much courage to write. It truly spoke to me in so many ways. Anyone who reads it will love it.  
*Donna Jorgensen*

On one level, this is a tale of looking for love in all the wrong places, but on a deeper level, it's a story of how adversity, viewed through the lens of insight and wisdom, leads to hope and redemption. It's a tumultuous, terrifying, frustrating but finally redemptive journey, as Jacqui struggles to uncover the heroine within. The miracle is that she comes out the other side alive - and willing to use her life story to inspire others to survive and flourish.  
*Giles Griffin*

This book has captivated me and is a page turner.  
*Sue Peterson*

*LIFE'S NOT YOGA or is it . . ? Finding Love in the Chaos of Life*  
by Jacqui Burnett

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## CONTENTS

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AUTHOR'S NOTE.....	1
PROLOGUE.....	3
PART ONE – BURNING SHAME.....	5
PART TWO – BURNING BRIDGES.....	131
PART THREE – RISING PHOENIX.....	297
ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS.....	337
ABOUT THE AUTHOR.....	341

## PROLOGUE

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THERE ARE A THOUSAND WAYS you can stare up at a snow-capped peak, but there's only one way you can lie up there dead in the ice. The mountains aren't here simply for our enjoyment. They are sublime and I am a dead woman walking through the snow, trying and failing to touch that other-worldly power. I am standing 11,000 feet above the world and staring down at the wreckage of my life. I came into this life as a stranger and now, after eight near-death experiences and 15 years of marriage, I am leaving as a stranger. My husband does not know me and I do not want to know myself. I avert my eyes from what lies inside, the way one looks away from a mangled body at the scene of a car accident. I want to keep speeding down the highway and put it all out of my mind, but I can't do that anymore. It's screaming to be let in. It's hammering on the windows and smashing through the doors to be let in, to be let out. I am frozen and the wind tugs at my clothing. If I stayed here and did not move, at last I would die. Now I know why I travelled over 15 000 kilometres to get to these mountains in Colorado. I am running away from the person I have become. I have been trapped inside someone else's idea of myself, which bears no relation to the truth of who I am, and I ache for someone to tell me what to do. I ache for someone to explain to me how I became like this. The snow keeps falling and I am alone.

# PART ONE

## BURNING SHAME



### *For My Father*

my imperfections  
are my beauty spots  
along life's mirrored wall

i wear their scars  
externally  
so you can see them all

my shame, my guilt, my blame  
my doubt  
my inner critic's plea

the freedom from  
their sight and sound  
projections gift to be

i know now that  
your mirrors' truth  
reflects the perfect me

uncomplicated  
for its grace  
my heart gives thanks to thee

Contextual note: Jacqui is 12 and has just had a heated argument with her father.

Extract from ...  
CHAPTER FIVE

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*Darkness cannot drive out darkness; only light can do that. Hate cannot drive out hate; only love can do that.*  
– Martin Luther King Jr

It was true: I was hard to love. I imagined my father drawing up a pros and cons list of having me as his daughter. On the good side, I was tough. Pain was nothing to me. I was smart. Dad said that women weren't cut out for working with numbers, but I was excellent at maths and science. I wasn't a loose girl like some of the high school girls that Alan and Mark hung around. They were all flirtatious and wore sexy bikinis and Alan's friend Amy was a bra model, which my father said was disgusting. I would never shame my father that way. I prayed and I read my Bible and enjoyed it. I wasn't vain – in fact, I never bothered to look in the mirror.

I wracked my brain trying to think of more reasons for him to love me, but came up blank. The negatives crowded in.

The first negative was the biggest and the rest all stemmed from it: I was an outspoken girl and there was nothing my father hated more than females with opinions. Women were made by God to only be involved with children, kitchen and church – and nothing else. God, as he had told me many times, made Man superior to Woman

like White is superior to Black. Girls should be married, barefoot and pregnant by nineteen – and that was that. I wasn't sure why we had to be barefoot.

He thought I was too sensitive, even though I could count the number of times I had cried in front of him on one hand. I was too inquisitive and I didn't respect my parents enough – I was always asking questions and interfering with adult things. I was disobedient. He'd told me that countless times. I caused him constant worry because I was a girl.

Contextual note: Jacqui is 16. Having swallowed a large quantity of pills to end her life, Jacqui has ended up in the doctor's office with her mother. They leave...

Extract from ...

## CHAPTER ELEVEN

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*Three things cannot be long hidden: the sun, the moon,  
and the truth. – Buddha*

My mother led me back to the car without saying a word. What did she think of me? As we drove home, I imagined her mind at work, snipping 12 August 1982 out of her memory and carefully shredding it into tiny pieces. Until it was permanent, until I was properly dead – preferably in a way that couldn't be described as an accident, such as hanging myself, slitting my wrists or shooting myself in the mouth, she wouldn't believe that I wanted to die. It was too inconvenient a fact and what would the neighbours say? Only white trash actually killed themselves.

She parked the car in the driveway and we got out. It was a white station wagon with wood panelling on the sides, just like Sue Ellen owned in *Dallas*. We loved watching *Dallas* on the television, but my father didn't approve of it. I always hoped it was because the main character, a dirty businessman and manipulative egomaniac, must have reminded my father of himself, but this was unlikely because my father was the least self-aware person on the planet. Had our surname been Ewing, I still doubt he would have drawn the parallel.

'Come on. What are you staring at the car for? I want you to try on your confirmation dress.'

Ten minutes later she had me standing on the coffee table in my confirmation dress as if nothing had happened.

'Okay, you can get down and take it off now. I'm just going to get a garment bag,' she said, and left me standing there alone.

Just as I'd pulled the dress off over my head, I heard my father walk into the room.

'That's a pretty dress,' he said, looking at it in my hands.

He smiled as he walked over to me and put his hand around my waist, resting it uncomfortably close to my right breast. I froze and stared straight ahead. I didn't want to be held like this. I heard my mother's footsteps returning. Then, slowly, just before she stepped back into the room, he removed his hand and patted my bum.

'You will be the prettiest girl at your confirmation,' he said.

He left the room.

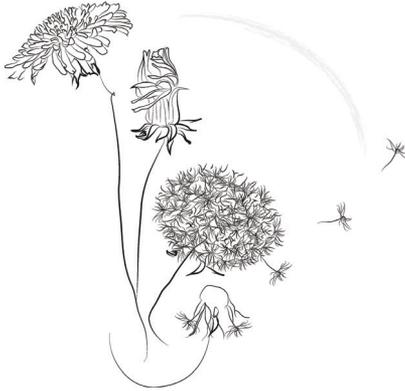
'Jacqueline, put the dress back on for one last alteration while I've got you here,' said my mother.

I stood mute while she fidgeted with the pins.

The dress was white and lacy, with a straight neckline and puffy sleeves that came in at the wrists. My mother had been making it for weeks. I was sorry I wouldn't get a chance to wear it and make her happy. I so wanted to be there for Reverend Jones and for the rest of my confirmation group, but I'd be dead by then.

# PART TWO

## BURNING BRIDGES



### *For My Mother*

no will to live  
i do confess  
a wish to die today

lost in hell  
i'm in distress  
i cannot find a way

the screaming truth  
of this desire  
to end it all i see

is in the shadow of my Self  
and not in truth  
me

Contextual note: Jacqui is 45 and her life is in chaos once again. Jacqui has travelled to America in search of answers...

Extract from ...

## CHAPTER EIGHTEEN

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*Beware the barrenness of a busy life. – Socrates*

THE SNOW MELTS AS IT touches my skin and I wish it would pile up and cover me, a white hand covering my mouth and nose so that I don't feel angry anymore. I'm hiking alone in the Rocky Mountains, in Colorado. I hike for answers but the mountains look on impassively. Granny would say I must work it out myself. What else would she say if she were here, hiking beside me? She would be hard and straight with me as she always was.

Twenty years have passed since the day my father hit me. My marriage to Greg didn't last long. Even so, I've been happy – gloriously so, at times. But now I am totally lost and, to be honest, somewhat terrified. You'd think I'd have had it all figured out by now, but I feel like a bat flying around a kitchen while someone swats at me with a dishcloth. From the outside, things look simply marvellous. I'd always thought adults had it all figured out, but the older I get, the more I realise that no one really has a clue what's going on. Sure, my mother's business went insolvent and Ouma lost her house and my dad is as crazy as ever, but apartheid had fallen and I'd done well.

I'd completed my undergraduate degree, gone on to get an MBA

and had had a ball studying in the Netherlands for a semester. I had fallen in love with my country again, made money and had a great career. I had built up a business from an insolvent mess to something worth millions. I had created jobs, salvaged failing businesses, made friends, travelled to many corners of the world and learned more than I ever could've foreseen. I had fallen in love with people, places, work and life – and I believed that, in my own small way, I had made a difference in the world where I could. I had helped people access better education and work opportunities and I had even adopted and fostered abandoned animals.

I'd cut ties with my father and made an effort to get closer to my mother – when my father allowed it, that is. I had learned that Dad had kept many secrets from Mom and noted that Mom forgot distressing events as her way of managing life. She'd even erased whole parts of my life from her memory. I had observed how painful this was for me. Although I missed my family, the status quo was best for all of us. Best of all, I had met the perfect man, fallen in love, got married and moved into a gorgeous house in one of the world's most beautiful cities. Michael was everything I could've wanted.

And still everything fell apart.

Contextual note: Jacqui is 46. Having lost everything, Jacqui is at a loss at how to face her fears.

Extract from ...

## CHAPTER THIRTY-SEVEN

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*The cure for pain is in the pain. – Rumi*

Now what?

All I can do is stick to my plan, move to Toronto and try my damn hardest to improve my writing so that maybe, someday, someone will get some good out of all of this. I need to let go of my fears, settle into this pain and let it be, the way I do with yoga.

‘This is just yoga, Jacqui. This is an uncomfortable pose. Find comfort in the discomfort,’ I tell myself.

‘Life is not fucking yoga! I’ve lost Michael. I’ve lost Dan. I’ve just lost everything.’

‘Find comfort in the discomfort. Try to stay present in this moment of pain and accept it.’

‘Oh, fuck off trying to be so zen. It’ll never get you anywhere.’

But it does – it gets me all the way to Toronto, even though, as I pack my entire life into a small suitcase and board the plane, I feel like I’m stepping off a skyscraper into thin air, my heart riddled with holes.

## PART THREE

# RISING PHOENIX



### *For My Self*

i wanted God to be external  
as i wanted someone to name

i wanted God to be external  
as i wanted someone to explain

i wanted God to be external  
as i wanted someone to blame

This story continues to unravel to its satisfying  
end in a way you just don't see coming.

*Nina Geraghty*

Order your copy of **Life's Not Yoga**  
from your favourite online retailer.

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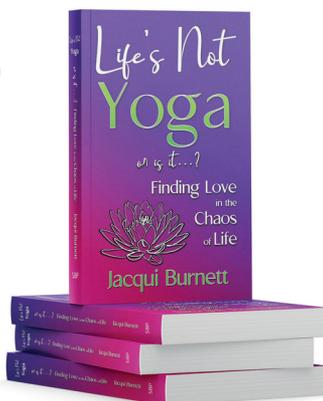
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*There are only 2 ways to Be in Life.  
To Be Love or Not!*

## AUTHOR'S NOTE

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**W**RITING A MEMOIR WHILE TRYING to disguise the nature and character of the people who have inspired and shaped me proved impossible. So, to preserve anonymity, I have changed the names of most people and some places. To further protect their identity, I have also modified details that might identify these individuals, when it did not impact the narrative.

I have made six exceptions. I have used the real names of Amanda and Jill, my two closest friends, as I wish to honour and celebrate them sincerely and publicly for their consistent and unconditional loving presence in my life. Without them, this book would not be in your hands. I have their consent and blessing for this decision. I have also used Mrs Hope and Blues' real names, as I believe some angels should have the light shone on them.

I have also chosen not to change the real name of Don Johnson (not the actor) and I thank the Me Too movement for giving me the courage to speak out in this instance.

Finally, I have used Deloitte's name as the story of our struggle with them is a matter of public record in South Africa and I am not bound by a non-disclosure agreement. I have not disclosed the names of the Deloitte employees involved in the matter.

At times I have omitted people and events, but only when that

omission had no impact on the substance of the story or its authenticity. To write this book, I have relied on my memory, my personal notes, correspondence and journals. The views, feelings, opinions, philosophies, emotions and recollections expressed in this book are my own and do not necessarily reflect the views or recollections of my family, friends, clients, associates or any other individuals in this book. I have researched facts where I could and I have consulted with several of the people who appear in the book.

The characteristics of my four brothers are composite, as are some of the events in chapter 1 to 4, and chapter 9 and 41. Where necessary, some letters have been edited and /or shortened. While my brother and I grew up listening to a fear-based racist narrative under Apartheid in the 1960s, '70s and '80s, I personally believe none of my brothers to be racist by nature.

To my ex-husband 'Michael', thank you for generously giving me your blessing so that I could be fully myself with this project, despite any discomfort that might cause you.

To my mother, my ultimate teacher in this life, thank you for being my mother. I love you, and I know as angels we will fly together again someday. Mom, you have your wings. I still have to earn mine.



## ABOUT THE AUTHOR

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JACQUI BURNETT IS AN ADVENTURER – both in journeys of the Spirit and in the world of financial strategy. Raised in South Africa, she is qualified in business studies, which has enabled her to help numerous businesses achieve their strategic and financial goals. However, Jacqui has always pursued a parallel interest in spirituality, which has guided her into her writing career.

Inspired by her discoveries on her own personal journey, Jacqui has created a successful platform called *The Dare to Be Love Journey*, which has attracted an audience of over 40 000 followers. Here, she shares her inspirational thoughts, poetry and personal life stories told through the lens of her unique *Dare to Be Love* self-development practices. Jacqui wrote her memoir in a quest to make spiritual sense of the traumatic life events she has experienced.

As an impassioned student of life, Jacqui continues to practise and promote living a Spirit-led life of courage, kindness, compassion and love. Her beloved Russian Blue cat, Sophie, is a constant source of joy and inspiration.

Jacqui has a Bachelor of Commerce degree from the University of South Africa in Industrial Psychology and Economics, and a MBA from the University of Witwatersrand, including a semester abroad at Rotterdam School of Management (RSM) Erasmus. Jacqui is also a

certified Integral Coach through New Ventures West, and trained as a yoga teacher with Yoga Tree, acquiring both these certifications in San Francisco, California.

This memoir, *Life's Not Yoga*, is Jacqui's first published book.

Website: <https://jacquiburnett.com/>

Facebook: <https://www.facebook.com/jacquiburnettauthor/>

Instagram: <https://www.instagram.com/jacquiburnettauthor/>

LinkedIn: <https://www.linkedin.com/in/jacquiburnett/>

#Dare2B 

#daretobelove 

## ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

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I OWE THE GREATEST DEBT to my mother for her unconditional love and support throughout my story-telling journey. Despite the initial discomfort I know my book caused her, I could not have completed it without her honest assessment of, and input on, my perspective. I learned so much from her during this process.

To my father, for all that we could not be for each other, I am sorry, and for all that we were able to give each other, thank you. Know that I love you.

To my ex-husband 'Michael', I will always love you. Thank you for being true to who you are.

To the writing coaches and teachers who gave their support, be it for editing, proofing, teaching or other, thank you for helping me elevate my writing and story-telling capabilities. In no specific order: Natalie Louw, Nina Geraghty, Samantha Rubenstein, Giles Griffin, Karin Schimke, Buzzy Jackson, Robin Enright and Catherine Johnson. To Natalie Louw, this final manuscript would not exist without you. Thank you for sharing your skills, holding my tears and, when necessary, making me laugh at the same time.

To my friends and other people dear to me, thank you for reading and critiquing the multiple versions of my manuscript; my mom, Amanda Mostert, Jill Meyer, Nora Edelstein, Gerard Kisbey-

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My thanks, too, to my dear friend, Rosmarie Baisch, for supporting me in ways too long to detail here.

To my grandmother, Dolly, and my aunts Anita, Dawn and Carol, thank you for always being there for me when mom could not be. Mom and I were both grateful for the many times you challenged me, advised me or simply made me feel safe.

To my brothers, know that I love each one of you and ask that you accept that mom loved my book, even though she felt she could not tell you this.

To 'Alison', for all that I do not know, what I do know is that I love you. May we meet again and heal our combined wound - if not in this life, then in our next.

To 'Dan' and 'Jolene', thank you for allowing your chaos to collide with mine for a moment in our lives. May your renewed commitment to each other continue to bear fruit.

To my Facebook community, thank you for encouraging me over the years to continue writing, for keeping me grounded to my committed intention that there are only two ways to be in life: *to Be Love or Not*. You keep me inspired, mostly conscious and deeply curious about the human condition, as I continue with Love in this journey called life.

To all those not mentioned by name, be it your choice, intentionally or by accident, please know that I remain grateful to each of you who have travelled with me, be it for a moment in time, for weeks, months or years. I have learned much from our experience together.

I would like to thank all the authors, inspirational leaders and spiritual teachers for the quotations I have used at the start of each chapter. A comprehensive effort has been made to ensure all of their words have been acknowledged appropriately and quoted correctly. If any acknowledgements have been omitted or I have misquoted someone, it is unintentional. If notified, the publishers will be happy to rectify any omissions or corrections in future editions.

Since coming to the understanding that Love is the answer, as a seeker I have chosen to study, read and research the works of multiple spiritual teachers, theologians, philosophers, psychologists, mystics and great leaders. Through their teachings, I have come to a deeper understanding of our purpose as human beings and the human condition. I am profoundly grateful to all those who have sacrificed so much for their message and for those who have put pen to paper over the years, ensuring that students like myself have access to the great teachings and understanding of God/Love/Universe/Source/Universal Wisdom, call it what you will.

I have chosen to share my recollection of these events, both happy and sad, as an educational tool for readers also wanting to live a life of joy, free from the shame, guilt and blame of their life stories. I can only ask that no judgments be placed on any individuals that I might refer to, despite what you might feel. While it may be tempting to judge certain characters in my book, myself included, for their actions, I believe we are all spirits of Love figuring out our journey and, in that respect, are no different from each other. By opening to this truth, I have found the ease to live in the presence of my full self, without having to suppress or deny any part of my story or my truth. In fully loving and accepting myself for all my perfect imperfections, I have opened up to unconditional love for all others, even as I navigate my own human challenges.

While I love reading about and absorbing a wide range of spiritual teachings from institutions that do not discriminate or judge the teachings of others, please note that my writings are non-

denominational. I believe that access to a spiritual life with a connection to God/Love is available to all and does not require a single or specific dogma. I do not believe God/Love is that small. When I refer to or quote the work of any of the many great spiritual teachers, I do not advocate the teachings of one above any other. At the same time, I comfortably and openly have my favourites.

Lastly, thank you to my little spirit friend Sophie, for cuddling up to me at night after the long hours I spend at my desk.

I remain a student as I continue to share the message of Love.



*There are only 2 ways to Be in Life.  
To Be Love or Not!*

*"It's Jacqui's engagingly frank voice and fierce self-enquiry that drive this fast-paced gripping tale through all its spirited twists and turns." Nina Geraghty*

**B**ORN INTO A PERFECT FAMILY, by 16, Jacqui Burnett wants to kill her father. With his gun.



Decades later, in her early '40s, Jacqui believes she has left her turbulent past and the trauma of eight near-death experiences behind her. On the surface, she has everything she's ever dreamed of—an education, success and a wonderful husband. What Jacqui doesn't know is that she's about to lose everything.

*'I was about to step into a board meeting but instead I slid from my office chair and cowered under my desk, sobbing. As managing director, I was meant to announce a year of outstanding results; instead, I was paralysed.'*

In a desperate search for answers, Jacqui travels to America. Alone in the Rocky Mountains, her life starts unravelling and the truth of her chaotic childhood begins to emerge.

In her confused attempts to find love and meaning, Jacqui has to face death one more time, along with an avalanche of unexpected obstacles, before rising from the ashes to heal.

*"On one level, this is a tale of looking for love in all the wrong places, but on a deeper level, it's a story of how adversity, viewed through the lens of insight and wisdom, leads to hope and redemption. It's a tumultuous, terrifying, frustrating journey, as Jacqui struggles to uncover the heroine within. The miracle is that she comes out the other side alive—and willing to use her life story to inspire others to survive and flourish." Giles Griffin*

