

THE AUSTRALIAN

Vale Clive James

By **TIM DOUGLAS**, EDITOR, REVIEW

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“Finally, you realise death is going to happen to you. You can either give up or make a subject out of it.” Clive James realised death was coming, and he has been preparing — in a psychological, but more pertinently a literary sense — for more than a decade. The raw and honest writing of his later years struck a chord with readers all around the world. Few packed more punch than Japanese Maple, which ends thus:

Filling the double doors to bathe my eyes,

A final flood of colors will live on

As my mind dies,

Burned by my vision of a world that shone

So brightly at the last, and then was gone.

Said James last year of his increasingly intimate understanding of death: “You have to be approaching the end of your life before you can see the world as I see it now. I’m quite pleased with that even though I’m a bit terrified because it really is the mark of the end, isn’t it? One’s hoping to make a good exit.”

A clue to the final exit point for the kid from Kogarah was given in 2011’s Procedure for Disposal: “Send my ashes home, where they can fall in their own sweet time from the harbour wall.”

Now that James has gone, all we are left with are his words. And what a wonderful legacy it is.

No one’s ever really gone. Or so says a voiceover in the trailer for the new Star Wars film, The Rise of Skywalker. And the voiceover isn’t wrong... It’s hard to believe it’s been three years since

the death of Carrie Fisher. The actress, most famous as Princess Leia in the Star Wars films, died in 2016, the day after Boxing Day — film's biggest day of the year. Fisher's death affected many, not least those who identified or at least sympathised with her public battles with alcohol, drugs and mental health. One of those who felt the pain keenly was director JJ Abrams, who directed Fisher in 2015's *The Force Awakens*. After that film's release, Fisher penned an autobiography, *The Princess Diarist*, and in the tome's acknowledgments she name-checked the director. "Special thanks to JJ Abrams, for putting up with me twice," she wrote. The problem was, up until her death, the pair had worked together only once. As Philippa Hawker writes today in an interview with Abrams, Fisher's was a prophecy of sorts, and one that will be realised when new Star Wars film *The Rise of Skywalker*, Episode IX, is released on December 19. The director has used old footage of the actress to ensure Leia is integral to the plot. Said Abrams this week of the portentous message: "I wasn't even supposed to direct Episode IX. It was a very Carrie thing to write something like that and to somehow know. It was really strange." Spooky.

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