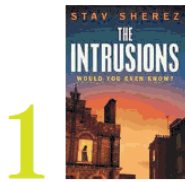
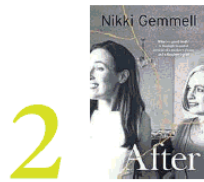


5 BOOKS IN 5 MINUTES



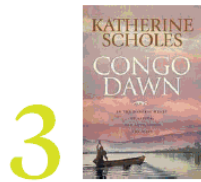
1

Crime
THE INTRUSIONS
Stav Sherez
Faber, \$29.99
There's a distinctly dystopian quality to a thriller that travels to the darker reaches of cyberspace. A hysterical young Australian rushes into a London police station and says her friend has been kidnapped. Her story is dismissed as a drug-induced hallucination, although DS Geneva Miller is not so sure. When the friend's body turns up, police investigate their hostel, one frequented by foreigners on working holidays. Easy targets, in other words, and made easier by the prevailing lack of privacy displayed by internet users. No one is who they seem, bemoans Geneva's boss in the face of his Sisyphian task. But, as the computer geek cop wryly puts it, on the internet no one knows you're a pig either. A better class of writing keeps the plot ticking along. Strongly recommended for social media addicts.
SHELLEY ORCHARD ★★★★★



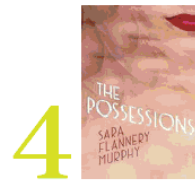
2

Memoir
AFTER
Nikki Gemmill
Fourth Estate, \$29.99*
After is the tender, touching story of the life and death of Nikki Gemmill's mother Elayne. Struggling with her diminished independence, Elayne decided "to choose the quality of her death". Taking her own life was "her last magnificent act of breaking free". There are immediate concerns: a police investigation, an autopsy, what to tell the children. Gemmill recounts each of these with urgency and raw emotion. There are also deeper issues: could we have done more, understood her more. All this is entwined in a mesh of old guilts and resentments. Inevitably more of us are now facing the challenge of caring for elderly parents, often as we are ageing. This intensely personal book demands we face some very uncomfortable truths. Read and imagine yourself in her place.
DIANA CARROLL ★★★★★
*\$19.95, News Shop, Waymouth St, city



3

Fiction
CONGO DAWN
Katherine Scholes
Viking, \$32.99
A restless Australian secretary suddenly finds herself in the Congo, searching for meaning in her life. It's a stretch to believe she'd naively land in a dangerous civil war but, as the story unfolds and the heroine is returned to her birthplace, a sense of the ridiculous fades. Scholes brings an intriguing connection between Australia and Africa to her writing as her memories of living in Tanzania and obvious research add a more complex layer. Secretary Anna Emerson's character also grows as she searches for her estranged father while avoiding Simba rebels and befriending dedicated missionary doctors working with leprosy patients. Set against the backdrop of the bloody violence of 1960s Congo, the narrative gains pace and becomes more compelling as it draws to a feel-good conclusion.
BELINDA WILLIS ★★★★★



4

Thriller
THE POSSESSIONS
Sarah Flannery Murphy
Scribe, \$29.99
The set-up for Sarah Flannery Murphy's debut novel is fascinating. Edie makes her living "channelling" the dead. As an Elysian Society "body" she hosts the departed for the benefit of those they left behind. She prides herself on her detachment, but things change when she meets Patrick. He wants to contact his wife, Sylvia, who died in puzzling circumstances. Edie starts to form an unexpected bond with both dead wife and grieving husband and her life suddenly becomes far more complicated. Meanwhile, she finds herself investigating another mysterious death. It's a clever plot, the writing is competent and the finale is clever. But the book loses momentum in places to become a grind. Murphy is graduating from short stories to novels and is yet to master the pacing required.
SCOTT MOORE ★★★★★



5

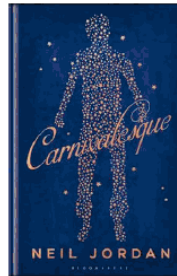
Teenage Fiction
THE THINGS WE PROMISE
J.C. Burke
Allen & Unwin, \$19.99
A 1992 report of the NSW Anti-Discrimination Board's inquiry into HIV and AIDS-related Discrimination provided the impetus for this heart-wrenching novel by an award-winning YA writer. A fairly standard account of high school romance, rivalry and fluctuating friendships is interwoven with a powerful introduction to the AIDS epidemic. Gemma's beloved older brother Billy, a rising star on the New York make-up scene, has promised to come home to transform his sister and two best friends into the belles of their Year 11 formal. But when a subdued Billy arrives he is mourning the recent death of his partner, Saul, and all too soon showing signs of infection himself. Gemma has a crash course in AIDS-related illness but in the ignorance, superstition and defensive antagonism of one-time friends and neighbours.
KATHARINE ENGLAND ★★★★★

Two titles in an otherworldly embrace

REVIEWED BY KATHARINE ENGLAND

Jane Rawson lives in Melbourne but her third novel is set with vivid immediacy in 19th century Adelaide – and in the unexpectedly intimate immensity of the universe. The book is based on the wreck of the steamship *Admella* stuck on a reef a kilometre off the SA coast for eight long days of thwarted attempts at rescue. Rawson's great-great-grandfather was one of 24 survivors. Of the others only one was a woman, and the mystery surrounding her identity has given the novelist licence to re-imagine her as a shape-shifting cephalopod from an alien dimension. If this sounds bizarre or comically kinky, Rawson's poetic lightness and matter-of-fact restraint make it quite beautifully not so. *Admella* steward George Hills first sees the woman in the hold communing with one of the spooked racehorses the ship is carrying to Melbourne. Later she will spread herself protectively over him on the wreck, enter his household as a cat and, when his son is born, camp as a birthmark on the child's neck. As he grows into boyhood Henry treats his Mark, as he calls it, like any other pet, with a straightforward intimacy not unlike his relationship with his little brother Georgie, but for his father it appears not only as a terrible threat to his son's future but also as an ever-present reminder of aspects of the

wreck that he would far rather forget. When devastating tragedy does strike the family he is driven to the verge of suicide. It is in this extremity, under the mundane timbers of the Semaphore jetty, that his alien shows him her own story, enabling him to see his place in the universe as a tiny speck, but a speck that survives to enjoy the simple miracles of existence – to "wear warm socks and drink water cool from the larder ... to close his eyes and sleep in a bed and wake under a warm sun ..." and the reader suddenly extrapolates from the plight of the lonely alien the accusation of the world's displaced and desperate: "all you could do was hate me and fear me and all I wanted was a place to be safe". The magical delicacy of Rawson's concept, the lightness of the writing, the resonant humanity and gentle humour all set this book apart from *Carnavalesque*, an overwrought clunker of a novel with not dissimilar otherworldly overtones by Irish film director and novelist Neil Jordan. When Andy and his parents visit a creaking old-style travelling carnival Andy is fascinated, literally, by a hall of mirrors that traps him inside and spits out an identical replica. The new Andy goes home with his parents, the old, now rearranged into Dany, stays with the circus and gradually discovers his true self as a preternaturally accomplished aerialist and legitimate descendant of ancient Celtic myth. He sleeps



Fiction
CARNAVALESQUE (April 2017)
Neil Jordan
Bloomsbury \$24.99

with the moth-eaten lion, helps the squat, muscular roustabouts and unnaturally stretched, long-reaching carnies (whose experimental origins are all explained) with the daily striking and re-erecting of the peripatetic show and joins in the harvesting of "mildew", an excretion which results from the emotion of the audience and sustains the carnival's metaphysical community. Meanwhile, in alternating chapters,



Fiction
FROM THE WRECK (March 1, 2017)
Jane Rawson
Transit Lounge \$29.95

Andy's mother adjusts to a newly developing, distant and incommunicative son and bears the brunt of the supernatural explosion onto the scene of the vengeful Dewlord/Lord of Mildew. Jordan's heavily elucidated concern seems to conflate "carnival" and "carnie" with "carnal" and "incarnate" in a complicated new Irish version of *Paradise Lost*. ●