

THE PENGUIN POST

VOLUME 39 THE MAGAZINE ABOUT BOOKS FOR BOOK LOVERS

HOME FOR THE HOLIDAYS WITH JAN HENDRIK



YOUR
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a hamper
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KINDNESS ENDURES

Charlie Mackesy's friends return, finding hope, love ... and cake

ENCHANTED SHELF

Holly Black on shadows, secrets, and the stories they tell

WILD WONDERS

KwaZulu-Natal's breathtaking nature and wildlife

TIME TO FEAST

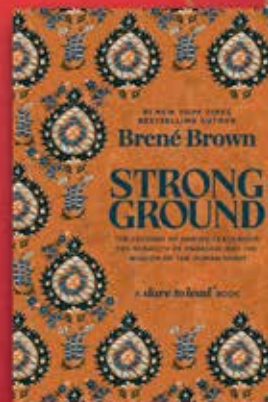
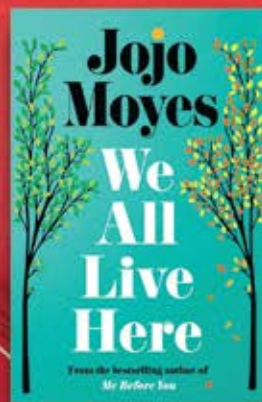
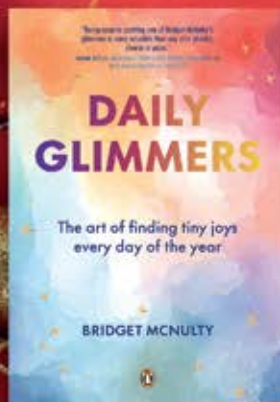
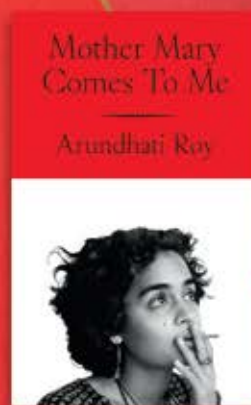
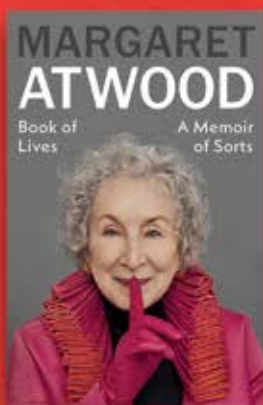
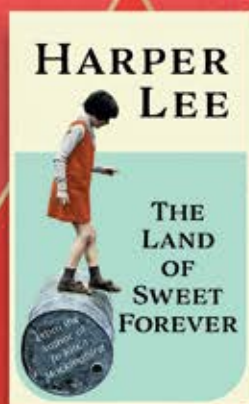
Celebrate with dishes everyone will love





PRESENTS

FOR PEOPLE YOU ACTUALLY LIKE





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Dear reader

Welcome to our festive edition, brimming with inspiration for the season of giving, sharing, and slowing down. In this issue, we celebrate the joy of home, family, and the gifts that spark wonder.

Jan Hendrik van der Westhuizen reflects on the magic of Christmas – from cherries and cloves to a celebratory pie – showing how his book *JAN Voyage* encourages us to savour moments with loved ones. Charlie Mackesy reminds us that even in life's storms, friendship, love, and a slice of cake can make everything brighter.

Our gift guides feature the books we cherish most, from timeless fiction to fantasy for the magic lover, and thought-provoking works for curious minds and seekers of insight. Explore the enchanting shelves of Holly Black, Gerda Taljaard, and Bill Bryson, or read Bongani Ngqulunga's examination of Jan Smuts for meaningful reads that spark conversation.

We also take you on a journey through KwaZulu-Natal's mountains, forests, and coastlines, celebrating the extraordinary biodiversity that will captivate nature lovers. Plus, festive menus, nostalgic reflections on Christmases past, and coffee table gems ensure there's a little something here for everyone.

Happy celebrating – and happy reading! Until next year.

Lauren

Lauren Mc Diarmid

ThePost@penguinrandomhouse.co.za



bookscape

news | snippets | what's new

Everyone's talking about ...

The collab between Viola Davis & James Patterson

Fans of gripping legal dramas have reason to celebrate: Academy Award-winning actress Viola Davis is joining forces with bestselling author James Patterson for a brand-new novel, *Judge Stone*, set to release in 2026. This highly anticipated collaboration promises a story brimming with suspense, intrigue, and the sharp twists both creators are known for.

Readers can expect a masterfully crafted novel that blends courtroom drama with psychological tension, unforgettable characters, and twists that will keep pages turning. Prepare to mark your calendars: *Judge Stone* is coming, and it promises to redefine what a legal thriller can be.

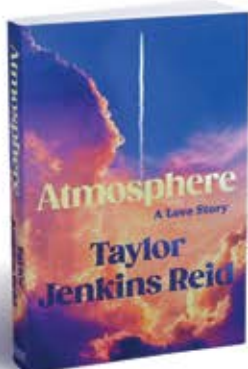
Judge Stone follows a formidable federal judge whose courtroom is rocked by a case that could threaten her career – and her life. As the lines between justice and danger blur, readers are taken on a pulse-pounding journey through the halls of power, where secrets, betrayals, and high-stakes decisions collide. Patterson's signature fast-paced narrative and Davis's compelling insight into complex characters combine to deliver a story that is as thrilling as it is emotionally resonant.

The announcement has already sparked excitement among fans of crime, legal thrillers, and character-driven suspense. With Davis's storytelling debut in the literary world and Patterson's track record of creating unputdownable thrillers, *Judge Stone* is poised to be one of 2026's most talked-about releases.



Judge Stone hits shelves March 2026.

PHOTOGRAPHS: Depositphotos, Stephanie Diani (photo courtesy of Investigation Discovery)



DOMINATING THE BESTSELLER LISTS

***Atmosphere* by Taylor Jenkins Reid**

"Taylor Jenkins Reid's new novel *Atmosphere* scores five gigantic, glorious, glittering stars. It's a breathtaking experience rather than just a good read. It was surprising and unexpected because, going by the premise, it's pretty much everything I would usually not want to read about: astrophysics, space travel, the technical universe that is NASA, and a love affair."

Gill Gifford, *Sunday Times Books*



IT'S FREE!

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#bookstagram

MUST of the MONTH



Living on bookstore visits and large amounts of iced coffee, Velishia is a marketing student who fell headfirst into all things bookish from a young age and never leaves home without a book.

"Five players. One high-stakes game. Jennifer Lynn Barnes delivers another masterful puzzle-filled adventure in *The Grandest Game*, the spin-off from *The Inheritance Games*. Best read after *The Brothers Hawthorne*, this story blends nostalgia with fresh suspense, featuring new and returning characters navigating impossible games, riddles, and secrets. Fans will delight in seeing Avery, Jameson, Nash, and Xander, while Grayson faces challenges without his brothers, revealing more of his backstory. The book's clever riddles and intense games keep readers guessing, with some clues tied to the characters' pasts. Memorable scenes, like the truth-or-dare challenge, keep tensions high, while small character interactions spark humour and swoons. With relentless plot twists, mind-bending puzzles, and a million-dollar mystery to solve, *The Grandest Game* is a thrilling, page-turning ride that showcases Barnes' unmatched talent for intrigue, suspense, and clever storytelling, keeping readers hooked from start to finish."

The Grandest Game is out now.

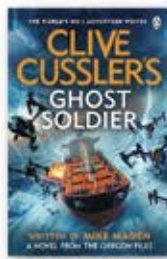


WIN! WIN! WIN!

A hamper of books from this issue valued at R1 500 is up for grabs to one lucky reader. To enter, scan the code using your phone camera, or visit www.penguinrandomhouse.co.za/competitions. Ts & Cs apply. Entries close 31 December 2025.

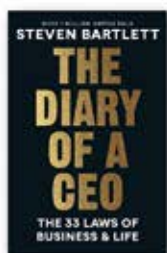


OUT IN PAPERBACK



CLIVE CUSSLER'S GHOST SOLDIER by Mike Maden

Juan Cabrillo and the Oregon crew face their deadliest mission yet: tracking a mysterious arms dealer from Africa to Asia, and confronting lethal AI weapons, drones, and mercenaries.



THE DIARY OF A CEO

by Steven Bartlett This runaway no.1 bestseller reveals timeless principles of success, rooted in psychology, behavioural science, and insights from global leaders, guiding anyone to build greatness.

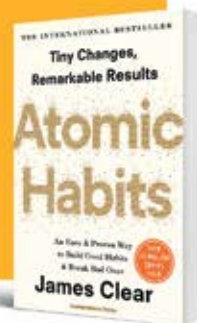


THE WEALTH MONEY CAN'T BUY by Robin Sharma

Robin Sharma reveals the '8 Forms of Wealth', offering a transformative method to achieve authentic success, fulfilment, personal power, and a truly rich life. A global bestseller.

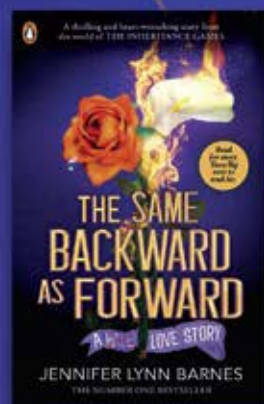
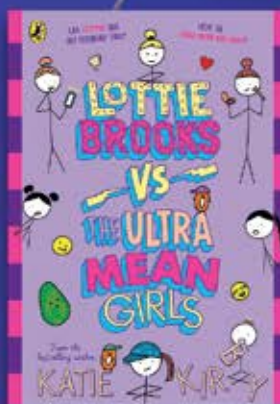
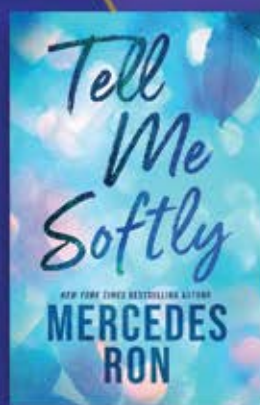
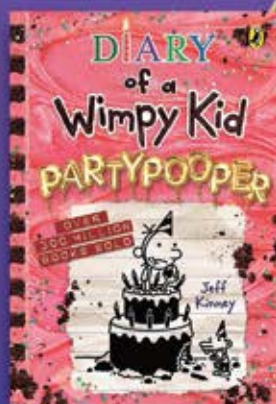
When scientists analyse people who appear to have tremendous self-control, it turns out those individuals aren't all that different from those who are struggling. Instead, 'disciplined' people are better at structuring their lives in a way that does not require heroic willpower and self-control.

James Clear, *Atomic Habits*





FOR THE Budding BOOKWORMS





GIFTS, STORIES & WONDER

Step inside, where the season of giving comes alive. From Jan Hendrik van der Westhuizen's cherry-and-clove Christmas reflections to Charlie Mackesy's reminders of love and friendship, we celebrate home, family, and joy. Discover curated gift guides, inspiring reads, and festive menus – everything to make your festive season magical, memorable, and full of heart.

A man with short brown hair and blue eyes, wearing a white button-down shirt, sits at a wooden table. His hands are clasped together near his chin, and he wears a colorful patterned wristband on his left wrist. In front of him is a large wooden bowl filled with a salad of green beans, corn, and other vegetables. To the right, there are some fries and a bottle. The background is a rustic wooden wall.

A TASTE OF HOME



Jan Hendrik van der Westhuizen reflects on festive memories, the magic of cherries and clove, and a celebratory Christmas pie, sharing how his gorgeous new cookbook, *JAN Voyage*, inspires slowing down and savouring special occasions.

“Christmas has always carried with it a certain magic for me, a

scent of nostalgia that transports me back to my childhood on the farm in Mpumalanga. For me, that magic is embodied in two ingredients: cherries and clove. Both are bold, assertive flavours that tell the story of festive seasons through their aroma and taste. The tartness of fresh cherries balances the warm, unmistakable spiciness of clove, and together they find their way into both sweet and savoury dishes. The smell alone brings me home. My oma used cloves liberally – she even sprinkled clove powder in her closet to keep it smelling fresh. For me, clove will always be Christmas.

Over the years, I've come to realise that food at Christmas is far more than nourishment; it's a language, a compass for life, love, and discovery. The festive season, for me, is all about connection. When I'm travelling or working abroad, I often go long periods without seeing my family. So when I gather around a table with them, sharing a meal becomes profoundly meaningful. It's in those moments of laughter, conversation, and quiet reflective silence that I find the true joy of the season. Whether it's over a simple dinner or heated leftovers from

the night before, slowing down, enjoying good food, and connecting with loved ones is the essence of Christmas.

My work has taken me all over the world, from hidden villages in Italy to tiny restaurants in France, and I've been fortunate to experience magical meals that feel like Christmas, even when the calendar says otherwise. One that stands out came from a small, hole-in-the-wall restaurant run by three generations of women: grandmother, mother, and daughter. Each day they prepared only a modest amount of food, but every dish was infused with extraordinary love and care. I still remember the slow-cooked rabbit with olives in a rich tomato sauce, paired with a delicate local white wine. The food was remarkable, but it was the people – their pride in what they created, their joy in sharing it – that made it unforgettable. That is something I've carried into my own cooking: the belief that food is a vessel for connection, and that simplicity, executed well, can be magical.

Throughout my journeys, the people I've met have been as inspiring as the places I've visited. Locals who have lovingly passed down recipes for generations never hesitate to share what they've learned, and their pride in nourishing others is something

I deeply admire. I've been struck by how the simplest techniques and the freshest local produce can capture the essence of a place. At the holidays, when we often feel pressure to host elaborate meals, I encourage a return to basics. Simplicity and quality ingredients are often all you need to create something beautiful.

If I had to tell the story of Christmas 2025 through a single dish, it would be a pie. We've perfected it at Le Bistrot de JAN in Nice, and it's become a recent fixation of mine. My ouma's short crust pastry forms the ideal base for fillings like guinea fowl, venison, or even a classic country chicken. Served with a creamed truffle sauce, the height and shape of the pie turn it into a statement of generosity and communal eating. For me, that's what Christmas is about: sharing, giving, and coming together around the table.

The holidays are also a reminder that life moves quickly, and our obsession with instant gratification can rob us of the joy in the process. That's why, in both cooking and life, I try to slow down. When preparing festive meals, I tell home cooks to savour each step: taste as you go, appreciate the ingredients, and enjoy the journey. The act of taking your time transforms the dish, making the final result richer, more rewarding, and ultimately more memorable.

My life spans countries – France, Italy, and South Africa – and wherever I am, the festive season has a way of amplifying both presence and absence. In Nice, I miss my family and the people I've known all my life. In South Africa, I think of my dog, Elizabeth, and my incredible community in France. That longing is, paradoxically, a gift: a reminder of



“
For me, Christmas isn't
about the place – it's about
the people I share it with.
”

the people who matter, and the love that surrounds us. For me, Christmas isn't about the place – it's about the people I share it with. As long as I am with them, it doesn't matter where I am.

Travel has also shaped the way I think about food and festive cooking. In my book, *JAN Voyage*, I try to capture more than recipes; it's about the essence of travel itself. One of the greatest lessons I hope readers take from it is the art of slowing down. Food tastes different when you take the time to notice it: the colour of tomatoes at the market, the texture of bread, the sun on your

face during a leisurely lunch. It's in these moments, when you are fully present, that meals transform from sustenance into an experience. My hope is that this approach carries into your own festive celebrations.

Christmas, for me, has always been a time to remember that food is a connector, a storyteller, and a means of celebrating life itself. From the clove-scented kitchens of my childhood in South Africa to the small, intimate meals shared in European villages, I've learned that generosity, presence, and love define the season. Pies, cherries, slow-cooked dishes, and simple, fresh ingredients all tell stories – stories of family, of travel, of tradition, and of the beauty in slowing down to savour each bite. That is the spirit I try to capture in my cooking, whether in my restaurant, on the page, or at the festive table at home.

Ultimately, Christmas is a

reminder that our lives are threaded with connection. The food we share, the people we gather around, and the moments we take to truly be present, all weave together to create memories that linger long after the dishes are cleared. The holidays, in all their complexity, are a celebration of togetherness, love, and generosity – just as the simple, bold flavours of clove and cherry, or a perfectly baked pie, remind us: it's not the extravagance of a dish, but the heart behind it, that makes it unforgettable.

And so, as you prepare your own festive table this year, my advice is simple: slow down, embrace the journey, and celebrate with the people who matter most. Fill your kitchen with the aromas of your own memories, whether it's the tartness of cherries, the warmth of clove, or the comfort of a pie straight from the oven. Let every dish be a story, every bite a connection, and every moment a reminder that Christmas, at its best, is not just about food – but about the love, laughter, and togetherness it brings.”



JAN Voyage is out now.



COVER

SERVES
6

PREP TIME
25 minutes


Prawn Cocktail

“My reimagined Christmas table would swap out the traditional turkey centrepiece for something simpler, yet even more delicious. A wonderful showstopper for the table is the classic prawn cocktail, given a fresh twist in JAN Voyage. It's light, summery, easy to prepare ahead of time, and the perfect way to start a festive meal. It's especially fitting for a warm South African Christmas.”

6 mini gem lettuce heads, washed and patted dry
600 g cooked prawns, shells removed
Salt and freshly ground black pepper, to taste
100 g good-quality mayonnaise
80 g tomato chutney
20 g tomato sauce
15 ml Worcestershire sauce
15 ml horseradish
Juice and zest of 1 lemon (keep some zest as garnish)
A generous amount of Tabasco sauce
A small handful of fresh chives, chopped, plus extra to garnish

Break up the gem lettuce heads into single leaves, ready to be added to 6 crystal glasses.

Season the prawns with salt and black pepper, then set aside.

Mix the remaining ingredients together, seasoning with salt and pepper. Add a spoon of this dressing to the bottom of each glass, then place the lettuce leaves next. Arrange the prawns attractively on top of the leaves and over the rims of the glasses. Finish the cocktails off by spooning the remaining dressing on top of all of the prawns and garnish with chopped chives and lemon zest. 

Recipe extracted from JAN Voyage, out now.

Try Jan Hendrik's
Parmesan Potatoes
on page 30



TO GET THROUGH THE STORM

Charlie Mackesy's four unlikely friends are wandering through the wilds again. They're not sure what they are looking for. They do know that life can be difficult, but that they love each other, and cake is often the answer.

Charlie Mackesy is back, and the world is waiting. His hugely anticipated new book revisits the much-loved universe of *The Boy, the Mole, the Fox and the Horse*, the bestselling adult non-fiction book of all time, with more than ten million readers worldwide. Mackesy's gentle, profoundly moving storytelling has captured hearts everywhere, blending whimsical illustrations with timeless wisdom, and this new work promises to do the same.

Once again, Mackesy's four unlikely friends wander through open landscapes and untamed wilds, unsure of exactly what they are searching for. What they do know is that life can be challenging, that love and friendship are anchors, and, as always, cake is often the answer. The characters' tender conversations offer reflections on courage, kindness, and resilience, reminding readers that even when dark clouds gather, hope and

"Be patient
with yourself."



"Shouting at a
flower won't make
it bloom."

understanding can carry us through.

'One day you'll look back and realise how hard it was, and just how well you did,' the new book offers, capturing the quiet strength and optimism that has made Mackesy's work so cherished. Through his signature blend of sketch, story, and sentiment, he explores life's small truths and monumental lessons alike.

For fans old and new, this is more than a book; it's a sanctuary of

thoughtfulness, a gentle companion for uncertain times, and a reminder that connection, compassion, and simple joys are what help us weather life's storms. Mackesy's latest work reaffirms why the world fell in love with his boy, his mole, his fox, and his horse – and why they remain unforgettable guides for all of us.



Always Remember is out now.

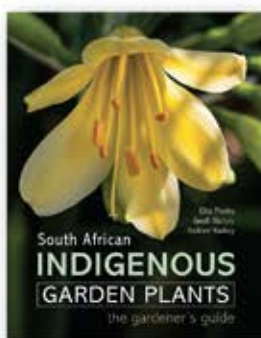
PHOTOGRAPH: Charlie Gray

ON DISPLAY

Coffee table gems

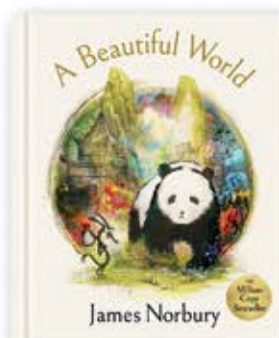
The Last Lions by Don Pinnock & Colin Bell

Lions, once rulers of vast territories, have lost 85 percent of their range, with fewer than 21 000 remaining. As habitat shrinks and persecution grows, their survival hangs in the balance. This powerful work follows rangers, scientists, and communities fighting to save them, pairing breathtaking images with stories of resilience and hope – an urgent call to rethink how humans and lions coexist before it's too late.



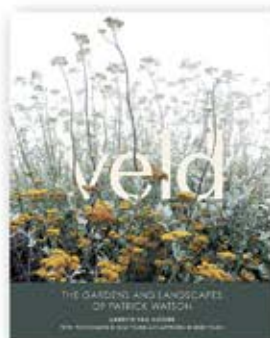
South African Indigenous Garden Plants by Elsa Pooley, Geoff Nichols & Andrew Hankey

This must-have guide features some 2 400 South African indigenous plants, offering gardeners expert advice on climate, garden styles, planning, and maintenance. Each section provides selection, planting, and care tips alongside brief species descriptions, and a Plant Selector helps choose plants for specific spaces, making this the perfect guide for gardeners, landscapers, and plant enthusiasts alike.



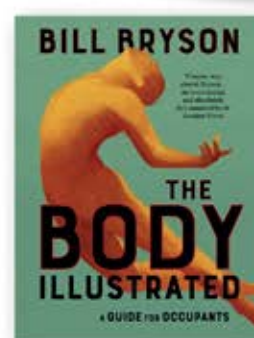
A Beautiful World by James Norbury

From the global bestseller of *Big Panda* and *Tiny Dragon*, James Norbury's fifth book follows the duo on another beautifully illustrated journey through forests, mountains, and ruins, discovering hidden beauty and hope. Inspired by Buddhist philosophy, the story reminds readers to notice life's simple pleasures, showing that even in overwhelming landscapes, moments of light and joy await those who look closely.




Veld: The Gardens and Landscapes of Patrick Watson by Garreth van Niekerk

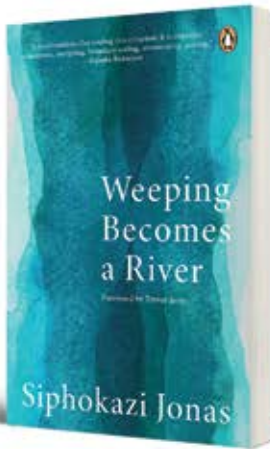
Patrick Watson is South Africa's most innovative landscape architect, designing everything from mega-sites like Sun City to intimate restorative gardens. Guided by intuition, botanical expertise, and conservation, he creates bold, nature-inspired spaces. Covering 23 of his more than 200 landscapes, the work celebrates Watson's visionary skill, creativity, and transformative impact on the profession.



The Body Illustrated: A Guide for Occupants by Bill Bryson

This illustrated edition of the Number One Bestseller and *Sunday Times* Science Book of the Year takes readers on a head-to-toe tour of the human body. Enhanced with hundreds of stunning images, it explores how the body functions, heals itself, and amazes with extraordinary facts, remarkable characters, and astonishing stories – making it an engaging, instantly classic read for science enthusiasts and general readers alike. 

MUST-HAVE FICTION



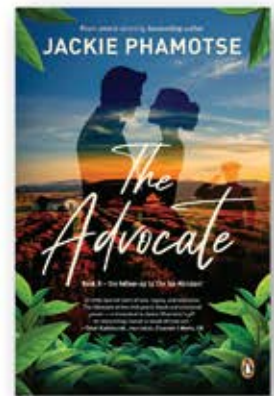
Weeping Becomes a River by Siphokazi Jonas

"Siphokazi has been winning awards for *Weeping Becomes a River*. If you have been lucky enough to meet her, then you will recognise her powerful voice in the writing world. Originally crafted as spoken performance, the words leap off the page and imprint themselves behind your eyes. They curl up in your amygdala and loiter in your eustachian tubes. It's an experience."
Sven Axelrad, author of *The Nicotine Gospel*



The Advocate by Jackie Phamotse

Secrets, lies, and simmering tension threaten to tear a family – and their rooibos farm – apart. As sinister forces tighten their grip on Clanwilliam, love, loyalty, and legacy hang by a thread. Every twist ratchets up the stakes, and the truth could either save or destroy them. Perfect for anyone who loves suspenseful family drama, this gripping tale makes a compelling gift for readers who crave heart, danger, and unforgettable characters.



This edition brings together Boyne's entire Elements series



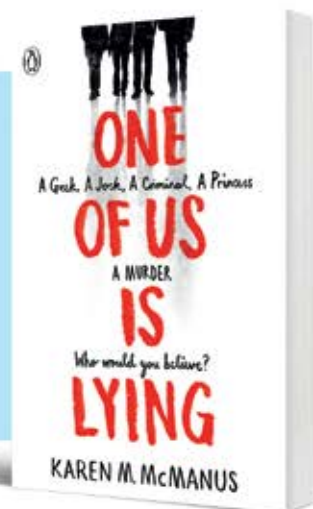
The Elements by John Boyne

This beautiful edition brings together Boyne's entire Elements series. It's the story of four intertwining lives – a mother fleeing her past, a young footballer on trial, a surgeon haunted by childhood trauma, and a father connecting with his son, and is a gripping, empathetic exploration of cause, consequence, and human fault lines. Spellbinding, unflinchingly honest, and profoundly moving, this is a story that lingers, and challenges the heart and mind.

One of Us is Lying by Karen M. McManus

"I didn't see this one coming. Karen brilliantly spins a mystery around five teens who walk into detention and only four walk out. As we follow the survivors, we're pulled into a tense, twisty hunt for the truth. I was convinced I knew who did it – until I didn't. Addictive, clever, and layered with themes of social media, judgement, and honesty, this story had me hooked till the very end."

Ntombi Nkabinde, author of *In the Late of Night*



Read the 3-part series

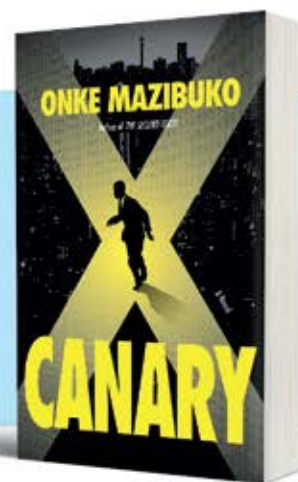


Canary by Onke Mazibuko

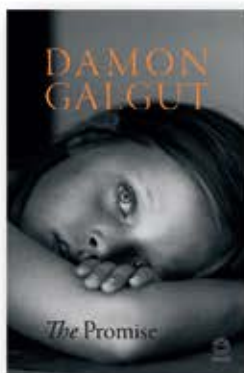
"This is one of the novels that stood out for me in 2025.

Canary is a tense, realistic thriller about a man who exposes corruption and risks everything for the truth. It's a powerful story about integrity in a compromised world. It'll really make you think, and reminds me of why South African fiction is so alive."

Kurt Ellis, author of *Deadly Benefits*



Winner of
the 2021
Booker Prize



The Promise by Damon Galgut

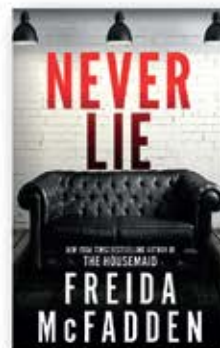
"Arguably, what distinguishes the brilliant writer from the indifferently good one is whether or not he or she is able to manipulate the chosen form, leaving it more resourceful, and pliable, for those who come after.

On these terms, Damon Galgut is decidedly a brilliant writer. *The Promise* is a major achievement."

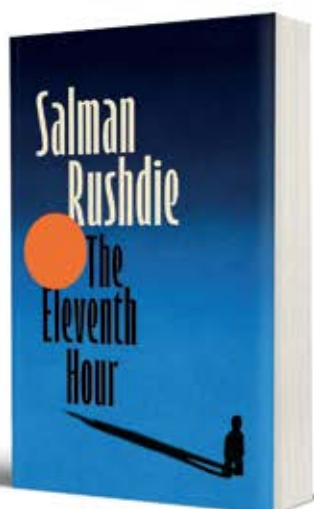
David Attwell, *litnet*

Never Lie by Freida McFadden

Newlyweds chasing their dream home get more than they bargained for when a remote manor traps them during a winter storm. Inside, hidden audio tapes reveal chilling secrets about the vanished former owner, a brilliant psychiatrist. As each shocking revelation unfolds, suspense tightens, leading to a jaw-dropping finale. An oldie, but a goodie, and a great one to get you started on your Freida McFadden journey.



Perfect for fans
of thrillers to keep
you up all night



The Eleventh Hour by Salman Rushdie

Two feisty old men, a tragic musician, and a ghostly academic navigate life, love, and loss across India, England, and America. These dazzling stories grapple with mortality, legacy, and the final reckoning we all face, infused with wit and imagination. Thoughtful, profound, and vividly alive, this collection makes a striking gift for anyone who loves literature that questions life, death, and everything in between.



READ THE EXTRACTS

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EVERY SHADOW TELLS A STORY

Author Holly Black reflects on the inspirations behind *Thief of Night*, exploring shadows as betrayers, the allure of outsiders, the pull of noir, and the emotional resonance of her shadow-born magic.

“When I first began working on *Thief of Night*, the idea of being hunted by your own shadow fascinated me. The inspiration came years ago, when I was walking home with my son. He was still small, and completely mesmerised by the way his shadow stretched under the streetlights, splitting in two when lit from different directions. That moment captured something magical and uncanny – because we’re all a little enamoured of our shadows, and a little afraid of them. I found myself wondering: what if your shadow didn’t move with you? What if it betrayed you?

This fascination naturally found its way into Charlie Hall’s story. For her, a shadow is both a literal adversary and a metaphor for unprocessed trauma – something she can’t outrun no matter how hard she tries. In Red, the dangerous Blight that wears the face of someone she once loved, that fear takes physical form. But in many ways, Charlie’s greatest struggle is internal: what she’s done, what she’s lost, and what she might become.

I’ve always been drawn to outsiders and tricksters, and that theme continues here. Those who live at the edges of things have a unique vantage point, able to see the seams in the world that others, more comfortably situated, often miss. Charlie Hall fits


into that tradition, but she’s different from the other characters I’ve written. She’s spent her life pretending to be someone she’s not, a skilled charlatan hiding from the truth of herself. What makes her both fragile and compelling is that she’s terrified of her own power – of what she could do if she stopped running from it. Beneath the bravado, she’s deeply human, awkward, bruised, and still learning how to own her strength.

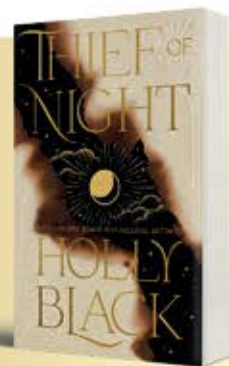
The way magic operates in this world also reflects those deeper struggles. I’ve always believed that magic has to serve the story and the character’s journey – it can’t just be clever mechanics or rules. It needs to feel emotionally resonant. I think about how it reflects the character’s arc, what it costs them, and how it bends toward the goals they already have. A good magic system should

live beyond the page; it should spark the imagination, suggest future stories, and leave the reader thinking about all the unseen possibilities. Shadow magic felt perfect for this series because it’s both seductive and dangerous – just like memory, trauma, and identity, the very things Charlie grapples with.

The noir and crime elements bring another texture to the story. I’ve always loved those genres – perhaps because I’m such a people-pleaser in my own life. Writing about characters who break the social contract allows me to explore the audacity of deception. In a way, writing itself is a con, a trick, a lie we agree to believe together. Noir pairs beautifully with shadows – it thrives in half-light, in what lingers just out of sight. It’s the perfect companion for a story about power, loss, and the thin line between illusion and truth.”

ABOUT THE BOOK

Once a skilled con artist, Charlie Hall is forced to serve the Cabal to protect her boyfriend, Vince, now partially lost to a dangerous Blight named Red. Memory erased and trust shattered, she must track a murderous Blight while navigating betrayal from her own shadow. Vulnerable and outmatched, Charlie faces a final, impossible choice that could save – or doom – the one person she never thought she could lose. 



Thief of Night is out now.

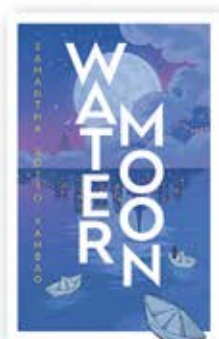
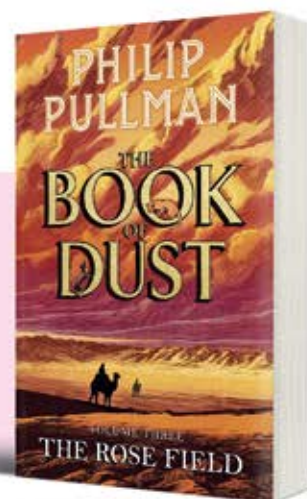
PHOTOGRAPH: Sharona Jacobs

FOR THE MAGIC LOVER

Give the gift of fantasy

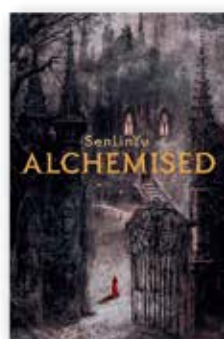
The Rose Field by Philip Pullman

In the exciting third volume of *The Book of Dust*, Lyra and Malcolm embark on a perilous journey across a world on the brink of chaos, seeking lost dæmons, hidden truths, and a mysterious red building. Along the way, they rely on spies, witches, gryphons, and old allies, confronting fear, power, and greed. Their quest uncovers secrets of imagination, special roses, and the alethiometer, all while the Magisterium threatens everything they hold dear. Their paths converge in a breathtaking, world-changing climax.



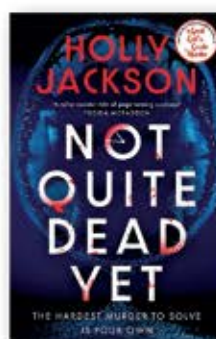
Water Moon by Samantha Sotto Yambao

On a hidden Tokyo backstreet, only the lost discover a pawnshop where life choices and regrets can be exchanged. Hana Ishikawa inherits the shop to find it ransacked, her father missing, and a precious item stolen. Joined by a mysterious stranger, she navigates a magical world, across cloud markets, and paper-crane rides, to uncover the truth, confront her own secret, and face an irreversible choice.



Alchemised by SenLinYu

Helena Marino, once a promising alchemist, is now a prisoner in a world ruled by corrupt guilds and necromancers. With her friends dead and memories fragmented, she faces a perilous journey to reclaim her lost past. Sent to a ruthless necromancer, she must uncover hidden truths and confront deadly secrets, fighting to protect her identity and uncover the Resistance's final, mysterious gambit. Her struggle has only just begun.




Not Quite Dead Yet by Holly Jackson

At 27, Jet Mason drifts through life back at her parents' home – until a Halloween attack leaves her with a fatal brain injury and just seven days to live. Jet never thought of herself as having enemies. But now she looks at everyone in a new light: her family, her ex-best friend turned sister-in-law, her former boyfriend – and she's determined to defy her doubters and solve her own impending murder before time runs out.



Accomplish to the Villain by Hannah Nicole Maehrer

Evie Sage never expected to become the right-hand woman to the kingdom's most terrifying villain. From accidental magical mayhem to navigating assassins in the break room and crowned, judgmental frogs, she must survive her chaotic job. Amid prophecy, danger, and a brooding boss, Evie struggles to protect the kingdom, her dignity, and her heart – because being evil-adjacent was never part of the plan, nor was falling for the Villain. 

'N KOPPIE KOFFIE MET ...

Gerda Taljaard is een van Afrikaans se juwele. Met haar nuwe boek wys sy weer waarom, en neem lesers op 'n fassinerende reis deur geskiedenis, geheime en die menslike ervaring.



Waarom Moskou, Rusland? Was jy al daar?

Ek kom uit 'n eksentrieke familie. Tydens die apartheidsjare het my een oom saans op Radio Moskou ingeskakel – seker maar 'n poging om agter die Ystergordyn te spioeneer, al sou hy nie 'n woord daarvan kon verstaan nie! Maar toe, een aand, speel daar hierdie ongelooflike stuk musiek wat onmiddellik met my geresoneer het, want ek kon my die sneeubedekte steppe, mere, berge en donker woude voorstel. Eers jare later, toe ek weer die musiek hoor, het ek uitgevind dat dit eintlik 'n tradisionele Oekraïense lied met die titel 'Oekraïense gedig' is wat deur die Russiese weermagkoor uitgevoer is. Dit was die oorspronklike vonk vir *Die grafdigter*. Ek was nog nie in Moskou nie, maar wel in Sint Petersburg. Al was dit net vir drie dae het dit 'n geweldige indruk op my gemaak – die klanke, reuke, geboue, museums, parke, mense, kos. Selfs die ligval.

Het jy al met *Die grafdigter* begin toe die oorlog tussen Rusland en Oekraïne uitgebreek het?

Toe ek *Die grafdigter* beplan het, het die oorlog nog nie begin nie,

en toe dit uitbreek, het ek weens gewetensbesware oorweeg om eerder nie met my boek voort te gaan nie. Uiteindelik het die oorlog deel van die verhaalgebeure geword, maar dit is nie waarop die fokus is nie. Dit gaan eerder oor gewone mense wat hulle in hierdie vreemde omstandighede bevind.

Jy hou van sprokies – hoekom? Wie het vir jou sprokies gelees as kind?

Deur middel van universele simbole en argetipes (heksagtige stiefma's, wyse ou tantes, bouse dwerge) gee sprokies uitdrukking aan ons diepste vrese, sodat dit wat in die (kollektiewe) onbewuste verberg lê, na vore kom. My ouma het sommer haar eie sprokies opgemaak – 'n tafel wat homself met lekkernye dek en 'n wors wat aan 'n boervrou se neus vassit. Dan het ons toegang gehad tot *Die Kinderensiklopedie* se versamelde sprokies, onder andere oor die Baba Jaga met haar huis op hoenderpote wat my eindeloos gefassineer het.

Die ruimte is 'n ander belangrike gegewe in *Die grafdigter*. Wil jy iets daarvoor sê?

Die atmosferiese plattelandse plek waarheen Mila en haar ouma tydens die wintermaande gaan, asook

waarheen Mila en Zhanna op 'n latere stadium reis, is 'n betowerende ruimte met digte woude en donker mere, pragtige kerke en kloosters. 'n Plek, soos Baboesja tereg opmerk, waar digters gebore word en die grens tussen droom en werklikheid vervaag. Ook die begraafplaasmilieu speel 'n belangrike rol in *Die grafdigter*, want elke karakter bepeins die mens se verganklikheid op sy of haar manier, asook die vooruitsig van 'n lewe ná die dood. Soos my karakter Zhanna, dwaal ek graag in begraafplase rond. Grafte vertel stories. Dit gee 'n nostalgiese blik op die verlede, op 'n stukkie geskiedenis wat saam met verweerde grafskrifte dreig om in die vergetelheid te verdwyn. 📖



Die grafdigter is nou beskikbaar.

PHOTOGRAPH: Joanne Olivier

VERHALE WAT BLY

'n Geskenkgids vir 'n ieder-en-elk

Binnerym van bloed deur Antjie Krog

Antjie Krog keer terug na die Vrystaatse vlaktes van haar kinderjare en die intieme verhouding met haar moeder, skrywer Dot Serfontein. In briewe, dagboekinskrywings en versorgingsverslae ondersoek sy kreatiwiteit, ideologie en die waarheid van oud word. Krog ontbloot geslagtelike verskille, maar ook liefde en bewondering. Pragtig en indringend verweef sy temas van kulturele erfgoed, oorlog, grondbesit, ras en verhoudings in haar mees persoonlike, maar universele werk.



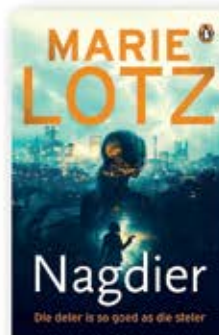
Déjà vu deur Chanette Paul

Wat skuil agter die Sheldon-fortuin? Zabeth Meyer kom na Kronkelrivier om navorsing vir krimiskrywer Wilbur Sheldon te doen. By Sheldon Manor, 'n Victoriaanse herehuis, tref sy vreemde tragedies aan: die oudste kleinkind verdrink, en sewe Sheldons sterf op een dag. Net Keith, 'n onbekwame erfgenaam, en die tagtigjarige matriarg Ethel oorleef. Kort ná Zabeth se aankoms gebeur nog 'n ongeluk, wat ou geheime en die verlede se intriges laat herleef.



Herman se tafel deur Herman Lensing

Dit begin alles met 'n besluit: om mense te nooi vir ete. Daarna volg beplanning – van datum en tema tot dekor en spyskaart. Met tien unieke tematiese spyskaarte bied Herman Lensing gebruikersvriendelike, stylvolle disse: van Suid-Afrikaanse gunsteling tot Italiaanse pastas en Franse nageregte, selfs happies vir honde. Hy wys ook hoe om die tafel te dek: óf met uitspattighede, óf met dit wat jy reeds in jou huis het. Vir hom simboliseer die etenstafel saamwees en vriendskap.




Nagdier deur Marie Lotz

Bekende sakeman Peet Hoffman word laatnag in sy studeerkamer doodgeskiet. 'n Paar dae later word 'n egpaar in hul naweekhuis vermoor. Die vrou is gruwelik om die lewe gebring, maar al drie moorde toon ooreenkomste. Waarom is Terese Ebersohn met soveel haat vermoor, en hoe hou die drie moorde verband met die ontvoering van 'n bejaarde man? Voor hy hom kom kry, bevind majoor Alek Strauss hom in 'n oorlog waar slegs die verlede die hede kan oplos.



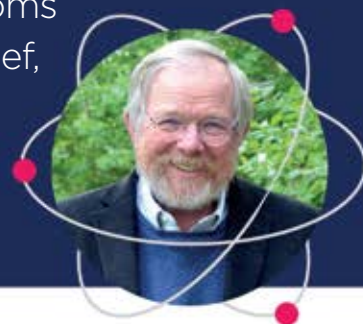
Laastegoed deur Annelie Botes

Annelie Botes se dood in 2024 het 'n geliefde era van meer as twee dekades afgesluit waarin haar rubrieke lesers inspirasie en insig gebied het. Hierdie bundel is 'n versameling van haar laaste stukke (2020–2024), geskryf tydens die pandemie, verlies en siekte. Vir haar toegewyde lesers is dit 'n kosbare nalatenskap – 'n vertroude stem en 'n bron van woorde wat hulle telkens kan troos en rigting gee. 



IMPROBABLE YOU

Against staggering odds, trillions of atoms have come together to create you – brief, miraculous, and unique, as this extract from Bill Bryson's *A Short History of Nearly Everything 2.0* explains.



“Welcome. And congratulations. I am delighted that you could make it. Getting here wasn't easy, I know. In fact, I suspect it was a little tougher than you realise.

To begin with, for you to be here now trillions of drifting atoms had somehow to assemble in an intricate and curiously obliging manner to create you. It's an arrangement so specialised and particular that it has never been tried before and will only exist this once. For the next many years (we hope) these tiny particles will uncomplainingly engage in all the billions of deft, cooperative efforts necessary to keep you intact and let you experience the supremely agreeable but generally underappreciated state known as existence.

Why atoms take this trouble is a bit of a puzzle. Being you is not a gratifying experience at the atomic level. For all their devoted attention, your atoms don't actually care about you – indeed, don't even know that you are there. They don't even know that they are there. They are mindless particles, after all, and not even themselves alive. (It is a slightly arresting notion that if you were to pick yourself apart with tweezers, one atom at a time, you would produce a mound of fine atomic


dust, none of which had ever been alive but all of which had once been you.) Yet somehow for the period of your existence they will answer to a single rigid impulse: to keep you you.

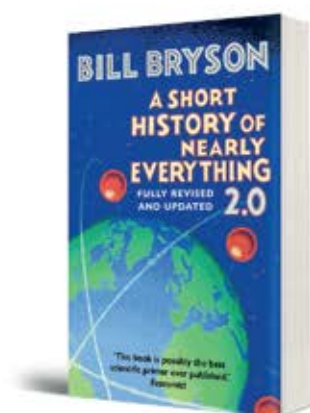
The bad news is that atoms are fickle and their time of devotion is fleeting – fleeting indeed. Even a long human life adds up to only about 700,000 hours. And when that modest milestone flashes into view, or at some other point thereabouts, for reasons unknown your atoms will close you down, then silently disassemble and go on to be other things. And that's it for you.

Still, you may rejoice that it happens at all. Generally speaking, in the universe it doesn't, so far as we can tell. This is decidedly odd because the atoms that so liberally and congenially flock together to form living things on Earth are exactly the same atoms that decline to do it elsewhere. Whatever else it may be, at the level of chemistry life is fantastically mundane. All that is required to make you, or any other living thing, is some carbon, hydrogen, oxygen and nitrogen, a little calcium, a dash of sulphur, a light dusting of other very ordinary elements – nothing you wouldn't find in any ordinary pharmacy – and that's all you need. The only thing special about the atoms that make

you is that they make you. That is, of course, the miracle of life.

Without atoms there would be no water or air or rocks, no stars and planets, no distant gassy clouds or swirling nebulae or any of the other things that make the universe so agreeably material. Atoms are so numerous and necessary that we easily overlook that they needn't actually exist at all. There is no law that requires the universe to fill itself with small particles of matter or to produce light and gravity and the other properties on which our existence hinges. There needn't actually be a universe. For a very long time there wasn't. There were no atoms and no universe for them to float about in. There was nothing – nothing at all anywhere.

So thank goodness for atoms.” 



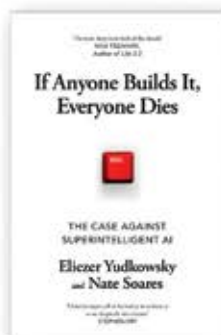
Extracted from *A Short History of Nearly Everything 2.0*, out now.

FOR THE CURIOUS MIND

Life hacks, and the science of living better

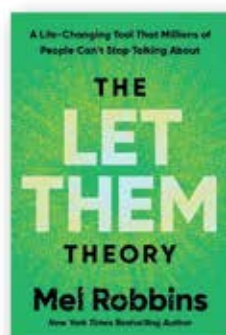
When Everyone Knows That Everyone Knows by Steven Pinker

Cognitive scientist Steven Pinker examines how we constantly think about what others think, a phenomenon called common knowledge. This shared awareness shapes everything from financial crashes to revolutions, diplomacy, cancel culture, and even first dates. Yet people often resist it, resorting to innuendo, hypocrisy, or denial. Exploring these paradoxes, Pinker reveals how our social lives are built on both the power and peril of knowing what everyone knows.



If Anyone Builds It, Everyone Dies by Eliezer Yudkowsky & Nate Soares

Two leading AI researchers warn that the race to create superintelligent machines poses humanity's greatest existential threat. They explain how artificial superintelligence could trigger global extinction, and argue that immediate halts in development are essential. The message is clear: without careful planning and restraint, the pursuit of machines smarter than humans could end civilisation.



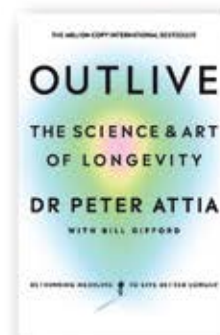
The Let Them Theory by Mel Robbins

Millions of people are discovering a life-changing approach to happiness, success, and love through a simple concept: *Let Them*. By freeing yourself from others' opinions, drama, and expectations, you reclaim control over your own life. Drawing on personal stories, expert insights, and practical guidance, this book teaches you to stop comparing, release fear, focus on what matters, and pursue your goals with confidence.



How to Manifest by Lacy Phillips

A science-backed approach to manifestation, grounded in transforming subconscious beliefs rather than relying on positive thinking alone. After struggling with traditional methods, Lacy Phillips developed her own formula by observing her internal patterns, later refining it with medical and holistic experts. Sharing her journey and client successes, she provides practical, step-by-step guidance to rewire the subconscious.



Outlive by Dr Peter Attia

A leading longevity expert presents a science-based roadmap to living longer and healthier. Rejecting reactive medicine, this guide offers a personalised, proactive strategy to prevent age-related diseases, enhance physical, cognitive, and emotional health, and make each decade better than the last. Practical, evidence-based advice empowers readers to outlive their genes and design a life of vitality, resilience, and improved quality of life at every stage. [P](#)



WHY SMUTS STILL MATTERS

Bongani Ngqulunga explores South Africa's divided memory of Jan Smuts, examining how black leaders once viewed him and why his legacy still sparks debate.

“As my family and I checked out of a B&B in Stellenbosch, the manager – a middle-aged white woman – came to see us off. She had noticed several books about Jan Smuts in our room and was curious why a black man like me would take such an interest in him. Growing up in the Free State, she explained, she had been taught that Smuts was a traitor, not a great Afrikaner leader. She found it fascinating that I would study such a person.

Her curiosity was understandable. Smuts has long divided opinion. During his life, fellow Afrikaners accused him of subordinating their nationalist cause to British imperial interests. His policy of conciliation – uniting Boer and British whites – was seen by some, like Barry Hertzog, as betraying Afrikaner interests. His 1948 defeat by D.F. Malan's National Party, which ushered in apartheid, marked more than a political shift: it represented the triumph of one vision for South Africa (SA) over another. The consequences of that vision over four decades, and its enduring legacy, are well known.

Yet Smuts's contributions to SA are often overlooked. His politics fit neither Afrikaner nationalism nor the African nationalist framework that later dominated. Still, his influence shapes the country's


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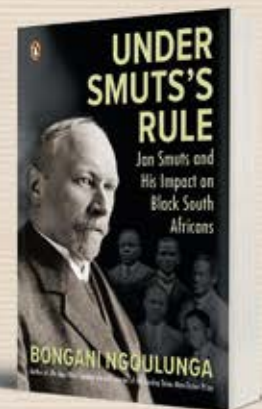
economic and political life to this day. With SA's future uncertain, interest in Smuts has surged. More books have explored his life than any other SA leader – not surprising, since he guided the nation and the world through two World Wars and helped forge a country united from civil strife.

In *Under Smuts's Rule*, I examine a question often ignored in writings about him: how did his long public career affect black South Africans? From early on, Smuts believed the nation's future depended on the relationship between black and white citizens. Twice as prime minister, he tried – often unsuccessfully – to confront what he called South Africa's ‘great sphinx problem.’

His approach drew sharp criticism, particularly from Hertzog, who accused him of endangering Afrikaner interests. Hertzog's faction ultimately pushed for apartheid, a system Smuts saw as harsh and unworkable. But if apartheid was no solution, what did Smuts propose instead? The book

explores these tensions and asks how black leaders viewed him. Despite repeated disappointments, they still regarded him as a leader they could engage with – and mourned his death deeply. Seen through a contemporary lens, this grief may seem puzzling, but it reflected both the remarkable leadership he demonstrated over a career spanning more than fifty years and the uncertain political prospects facing black South Africans.

The book also confronts a larger question: did Smuts's segregationist policies lay the groundwork for apartheid's triumph in 1948? And ultimately, it asks what it means to remember a figure as divisive as Smuts – someone whose legacy continues to shape South Africa, even decades after his death. Understanding him, I argue, is essential for anyone seeking to grasp the complexities of the nation's past and its path forward.” 



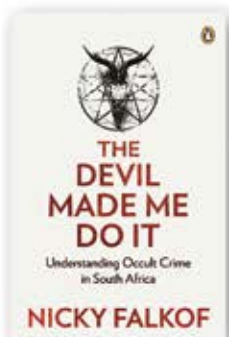
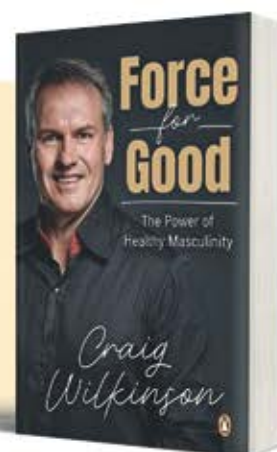
Under Smuts's Rule is out now.

POWERFUL READS TO GIVE

A gift guide for insight and impact

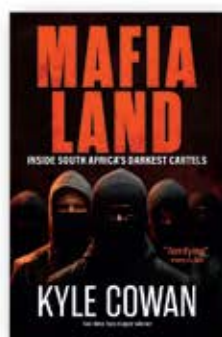
Force for Good by Craig Wilkinson

This bold exploration presents a balanced vision of masculinity, urging men to embrace strength and power in service of good. It challenges extremes of dominance and passivity, exploring the journey from boyhood to purposeful manhood. Divided into three parts – Being Man, Becoming a Force, and Doing Good – it guides men to cultivate confidence, humility, and responsibility, showing how true power, when rightly used, can positively impact the world.



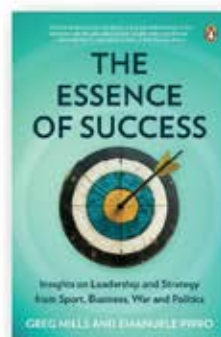
The Devil Made Me Do It by Nicky Falkof

South Africa's fascination with occult crime – from witchcraft and muti murders to satanic conspiracies – reflects deeper social anxieties. Examining infamous cases, this book explores how supernatural beliefs intersect with gender, race, class, and inequality, questioning why the nation often blames evil forces for violence and misfortune, and what these cases reveal about contemporary society and its fractured psyche.



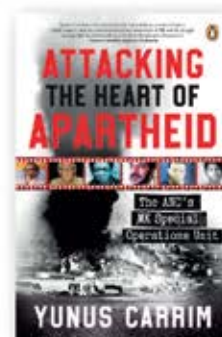
Mafia Land by Kyle Cowan

Beneath South Africa's surface, powerful mafias – from tobacco and taxis to hospitals and construction – wage ruthless wars over the nation's wealth. Their influence spans street level to government, silencing opponents and blurring the line between crime and state. This book exposes twelve of SA's deadliest cartels, revealing a brutal system where corruption, violence, and exploitation challenge the very notion of law and order.




The Essence of Success by Greg Mills & Emanuele Pirro

This book identifies key leadership traits – organisation, planning, skill-building, teamwork, long-term focus, and self-improvement – showing that dedication, careful strategy, and personal growth, rather than luck alone, drive achievement. Drawing lessons from diverse fields and eras, it emphasises empowerment: progress comes from competing with yourself, continually improving, and turning potential into results.



Attacking the Heart of Apartheid by Yunus Carrim

For over three decades, the story of Umkhonto we Sizwe's elite Special Operations Unit remained largely untold. Operating under ANC leadership, they carried out daring attacks against apartheid, including the 1980 Sasol bombings. Through interviews, press reports, and official records, this oral history reveals the unit's strategies, challenges, and impact, offering an intimate, comprehensive look at their role in the broader anti-apartheid struggle. 

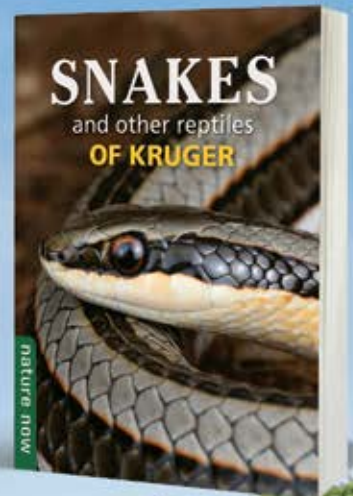
A WONDERLAND OF LIFE

An ode to KwaZulu-Natal's mountains, forests, and coastlines, celebrating its extraordinary biodiversity, sweeping landscapes, and unforgettable encounters with plants, birds, spiders, reptiles, and trees through the eyes of passionate naturalists.

“You can't beat northern KwaZulu-Natal in the summer.”

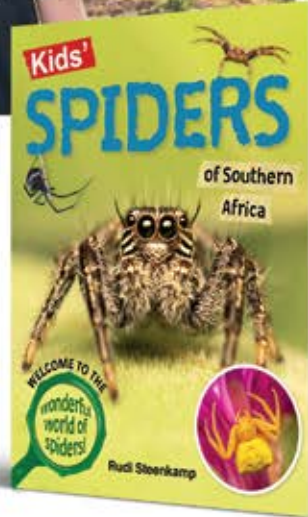
“The tropical weather hosts an abundance of reptiles and amphibians and a night walk or drive can produce a huge collection of these animals. The early morning walks deliver a diversity of birds but there's also the chance to find basking green snakes, chameleons and tortoises. Gently scratching through leaf litter can produce a variety of legless lizards, animals not often seen by the public yet in high abundance in parts of KZN. The deafening calls of reed frogs along the wetlands at night can be heard from kilometres away. The habitat is also so varied: you can start the morning in a thick coastal forest, walk estuaries and wetlands by midday and be in bushveld habitat by the afternoon. The number of reserves and protected areas truly makes this a naturalist's paradise.”

Luke Kemp, author of *Snakes and Other Reptiles of Kruger*





“I’d only been to KZN twice before, and not for long, so it was a treat to visit so many beautiful places and see the huge diversity of spiders found here.”



“I have always loved mountains because they humble us.”

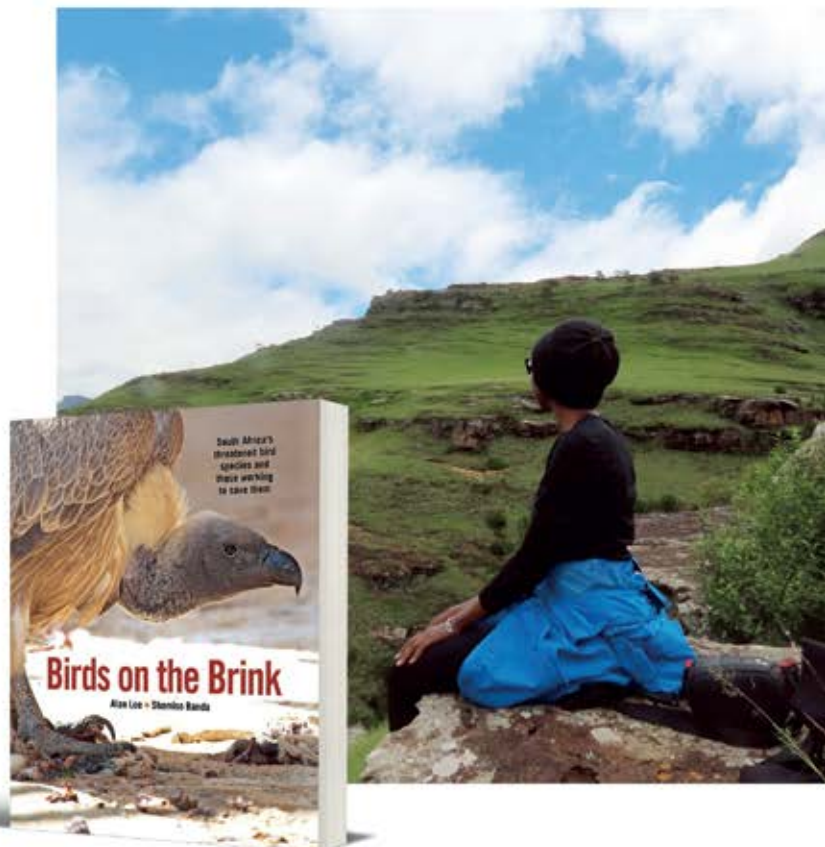
“In 2020, I had the chance to accompany Ruan Booysen, an arachnologist at the University of the Free State, on his three-week fieldwork trip to KwaZulu-Natal. I’d only been to KZN twice before, and not for long, so it was a treat to visit so many beautiful places and see the huge diversity of spiders found here. We managed to find the rare and very odd-looking pelican spider (*Afrarchaea cornuta*), and also had a chance to see how big the newly described Phinda button spider (*Latrodectus umbukwane*) is. These spiders are found only in KZN. I also ticked off a few bucket-list spiders and saw ones I never knew existed, as well as species unknown to science, like Foord’s polka-dot ant spider (*Asceva foordi*), which was described in 2025. I have always loved mountains because they humble us by making us feel small and insignificant, so the Drakensberg Mountains were a real highlight for me. In the Royal Natal National Park, with the majestic mountains as a backdrop, we found the very fluffy sheepy jumping spider (*Oviballus vidae*), which was described that year. Here we were collecting spiders near Cathedral Peak. This was an unforgettable trip, and I would love to return to this beautiful province one day.”

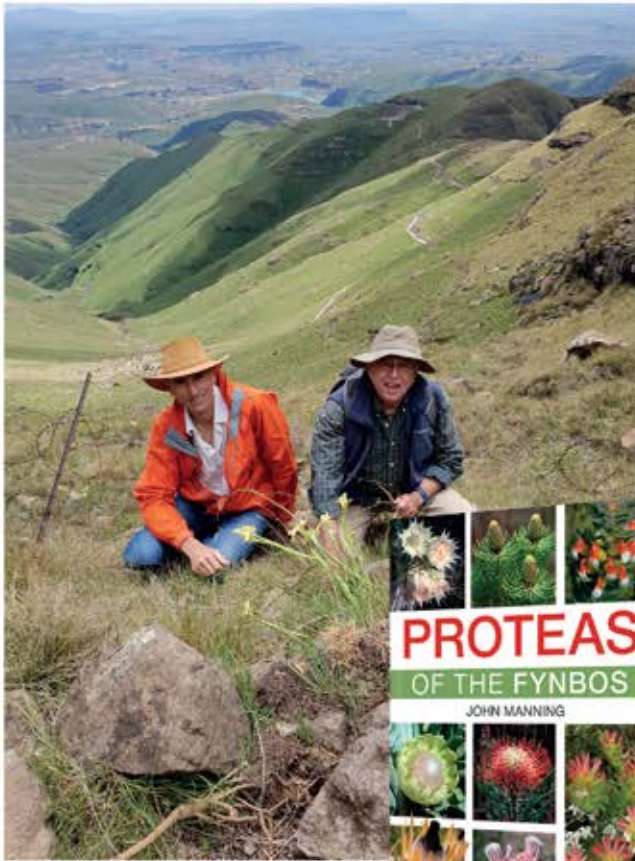
Rudi Steenkamp, author of *Kids’ Spiders of Southern Africa*

“The Drakensberg is a place of beauty, stillness, joy and gifts.”

“I’ve only spent two full summers in South Africa, and the Drakensberg mountains quickly became my favourite destination. Attending the Dharmagiri Sacred Mountain Retreat in Underberg is what took me there, and what will keep me coming back to be immersed in serenity, birdsong, and sweeping views. The drive itself was part of the adventure – watching Johannesburg slip away as vast greens and browns unfolded over 7.5 hours, punctuated by bird sightings. At the retreat, guided meditations (both indoors and outdoors) were intensely grounding and relaxing, and the vegan meals were some of the most delicious I’ve ever had. Highlights included photographing Greater Double-collared Sunbirds for the first time, and on the return journey, spotting two Secretarybirds – a globally Endangered species I had longed to see again after my first sighting five years prior. For me, the Drakensberg is a place of beauty, stillness, joy and gifts.”

Shamiso Banda, author of *Birds on the Brink*





“The cool, damp slopes of the Drakensberg are very fresh in my mind.”

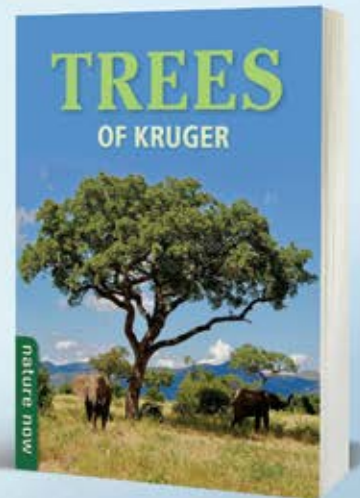
“The Midlands of KwaZulu-Natal were my home until I left university for Cape Town in 1988. As a schoolboy and student, I spent every weekend, and as many afternoons as I could, walking the grasslands that surrounded our house. My early enthusiasm for the intricate beauty of the ground orchids that abounded on the hillsides was supplemented at a later stage by a fascination for the grasses among which they grew, manifold in their variety and mind-boggling in the microscopic complexity of their structure. I was privileged to study under the doyenne of Drakensberg botany, Professor Olive Hilliard. On field trips into the high Drakensberg, our botanical impedimenta slung on packhorses, she instilled in me a rigorous scientific curiosity that formed the basis for my career as a plant taxonomist. Each morning we scoured the slopes and gullies for plant specimens, retiring before the afternoon storms built up to the large sandstone overhang in which we had set up camp to process the material we had gathered. My move to the south, into the heart of the Cape Floral Kingdom, launched me on the botanical journey of a lifetime but during the hot summer months, when the southeaster desiccates even the toughest fynbos shrubs, and the bulbs have retired underground, the cool, damp slopes of the Drakensberg are very fresh in my mind.”

John Manning, author of *Proteas of the Fynbos*

“It’s South Africa’s most diverse nature reserve as far as trees are concerned.”

“We’ve found the perfect spot to keep the whole family happy in Port Edward – seaside for the family to enjoy, and, for this taxonomic botanist, the nearby Umtamvuna Nature Reserve (UNR). It’s the southernmost reserve in the province, bordering the Mtamvuna River, and boasts lush forests interspersed with grasslands. UNR offers scenic trails and a diverse array of plant species, particularly appealing to a tree enthusiast like me. With over 500 tree species, it’s South Africa’s most diverse nature reserve as far as trees are concerned, housing many rarely seen species found only in southern KwaZulu-Natal and the bordering Eastern Cape. These unique trees thrive in the forested strips along tributaries of the Umtamvuna River, readily accessible via the Izingolweni Road. Exploring these forest edges is like visiting a specialised botanical garden dedicated to exceptional trees.”

Braam van Wyk, author of *Trees of Kruger*



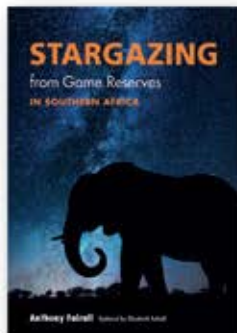
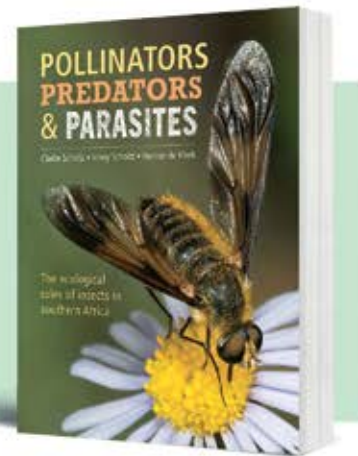
FOR THE NATURE LOVER

Birds, stars, and desert wonders

Pollinators, Predators & Parasites

by **Clarke Scholtz, Jenny Scholtz & Hennie de Klerk**

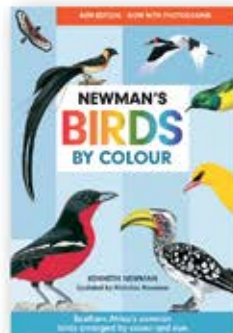
A richly illustrated exploration of southern Africa's insects, this authoritative volume reveals their vital roles as pollinators, predators, parasites, and decomposers across 13 biomes. Through accessible text and over 1,600 photographs, it uncovers how insects sustain ecosystems, feed countless species, and shape soils and nutrients – offering fresh insight into their beauty, diversity, and essential ecological services for both scientists and nature lovers.



Stargazing from Game Reserves in Southern Africa

by **Anthony Fairall & Elizabeth Fairall**

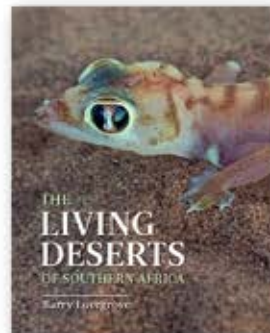
Discover the splendour of Southern Africa's night skies, free from city lights. This updated guide takes readers on a celestial "game drive" to the Big Five constellations, with clear steps for navigating stars, tracking planets, and spotting Jupiter's moons. Richly illustrated with charts, photos, and fascinating facts, it's an accessible, expert companion for every stargazer.



Newman's Birds by Colour

by **Kenneth Newman & Nick Newman**

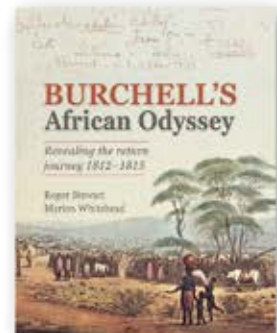
This updated fourth edition offers beginner birders a quick and simple way to identify southern Africa's most common birds using colour as a starting point. An informative introduction provides practical tips for identifying birds, and includes information on bird anatomy and classification, and guidance on where to look for birds and what you need to go birding.



The Living Deserts of Southern Africa

by **Barry Lovegrove**

For centuries, the deserts of southern Africa have fascinated scientists and explorers alike. Far from lifeless, these arid regions teem with plants and animals uniquely adapted to scarce water, extreme heat, and shifting climates. Biologist Barry Lovegrove reveals how life thrives in the four great arid biomes of South Africa, Namibia, and Botswana, weaving cutting-edge research with stunning images and accessible insight into nature's resilience.



Burchell's African Odyssey

by **Roger Stewart & Marion Whitehead**

In 1811, English naturalist William Burchell set out from Cape Town to explore southern Africa, collecting over 63 000 specimens and 500 artworks along the way. While his outward journey is well known, this richly illustrated account follows his return from 1812–1815 – across the northern Cape, Karoo, and southern coast – revealing new insights into his discoveries, hardships, and enduring legacy as a pioneer of natural history. ⓘ

THE MENU

What a task it was to put this together! There were just so many delicious options to choose from this year. But we think we've nailed it with tasty treats to fill everyone at the table with joy.

FIRST BITES

Charcuterie Board Dutch Baby

"If you've never had a Dutch baby, then you have to try this. It's halfway between a golden puffy pancake and a Yorkshire pudding. They can be sweet or savoury, and I've plonked a charcuterie board on top of this one. It's fun, tasty and easy to make." – Karl Tessenorff

THE BATTER

1 C cake wheat flour
1 Tbsp sugar
½ tsp salt
1 C milk
6 large eggs
A large knob of butter
¼ C grated parmesan

THE TOPPINGS

A handful of wild rocket
1–2 large burrata
70 g Parma ham
3 preserved figs, quartered
¼ C pistachios, crushed
Balsamic reduction
Sea salt and freshly ground black pepper

Add the flour, sugar, salt, milk and eggs to a large mixing bowl. Whisk very well or use an electric whisk until smooth. Let the batter sit while the oven preheats to 220 °C. Pop a large cast-iron pan or flat-bottomed potjie into the oven to preheat

FEEDS
4–6

PREP
35 MINUTES

COOK
25 MINUTES

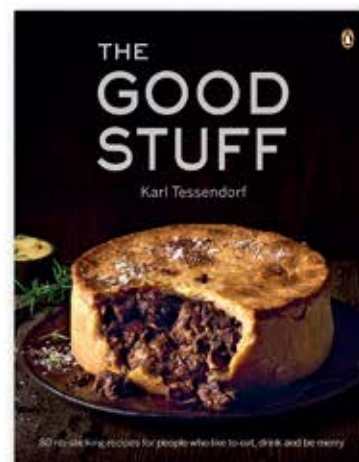
for 15 minutes. If you are using a flatbottomed potjie, bake the Dutch baby with the lid on. If you are using a cast-iron pan, bake it without a lid.

Whisk the batter again, then remove the pan from the oven. Add the butter to the pan and use a brush to paint the entire surface and sides as it melts. Pour in the batter and quickly sprinkle on the parmesan. Place the lid on the potjie, but not on the pan, then pop it in the oven and let it bake for 25 minutes. Don't open the oven, or you risk deflating the pancake.

After 25 minutes, remove the pan from the oven. The pancake will collapse as it cools. Let it cool for a few minutes, then carefully remove it from the pan using a spatula and place it on a serving plate.



To dress, top with rocket, then place the burrata in the middle. Arrange spirals of ham around the cheese, then finish with figs, pistachios, a drizzle of balsamic, salt and pepper. Slice and serve.



Extracted from *The Good Stuff* by Karl Tessenorff, out now.

SHOWSTOPPERS

Skaapboud

"One of the most popular celebratory 'Boerekos' mains is a roast leg of mutton, or 'skaapboud', cooked with potatoes in a casserole in the oven. The potatoes cook in the mutton fat and pan sauces, creating a delicious confit effect. Skaapboud with potatoes are commonly served with gravy and rice, and probably the source of Afrikaans people's love of 'rys, vleis en aartappels' (rice, meat and potatoes are the epitome of South African Boerekos). This is a traditional recipe for skaapboud, made with sherry. Dry white wine can also be used as a substitute, or just mutton stock." – Ilse van der Merwe

1 large leg of mutton, trimmed by your butcher so that it will fit into a casserole

30–45 ml (2–3 Tbsp) olive oil

salt and pepper, to taste

4 cloves garlic, each sliced lengthways into 4 wedges

2 sprigs rosemary

125 ml (½ cup) water

125 ml (½ cup) semi-sweet sherry

6 medium potatoes, peeled and halved

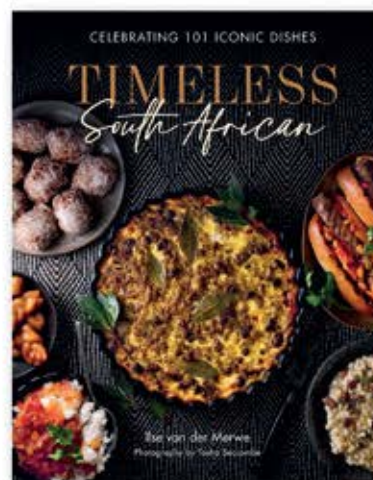
**SERVES
AT LEAST 6**



Preheat the oven to 160°C. Place the meat in a large casserole, then rub all over with olive oil and season well with salt and pepper. Use a small, sharp knife to make slits all over, then stuff the garlic wedges into the slits. Place the rosemary at the sides of the casserole, then add the water and sherry. Cover with a lid or with heavy foil, then roast for 3 hours. Place the potatoes next to the meat in the casserole, cover with the foil, then roast for another hour. Remove the foil, turn the potatoes

over, turn the heat up to 180°C and roast for another 30 minutes until golden-brown. Pour the pan sauces into a small saucepan, skim off the fat and create a thickened gravy of your preference on the stovetop (keeping the meat warm and covered with foil). Slice the meat and serve warm with the gravy, cooked rice and your choice of sides.

Extracted from *Timeless South African* by Ilse van der Merwe, out now.



SHOWSTOPPERS

Herb-crusted Salmon

4 x 150 g salmon fillets
½ cup lightly salted store-bought breadcrumbs
1 Tbsp finely chopped fresh parsley
1 tsp grated lemon zest
½ tsp crushed garlic
200 g asparagus or tenderstem broccoli, trimmed
1–2 Tbsp olive oil
1 Tbsp chopped fresh parsley or chives
Fresh lemon juice

Preheat the oven to 190°C.

Prepare the salmon by adding the portions to a large non-stick baking tray. Combine the breadcrumbs, parsley, lemon zest and garlic and divide the herbed crumb mix between each portion, spreading gently over the top of each one and patting down gently with the back of the spoon. Add the greens to the tray, season and drizzle with a little olive oil. Roast for 10–12 minutes or until the fish is cooked through and can be easily flaked with a fork.

Serve with a scattering of fresh parsley or chives and a squeeze of fresh lemon juice.



SERVES
4

READY IN
20 MINUTES



Extracted from *Simple Suppers* by Sarah Graham, out now.

GARDEN GREATS

Cauliflower Steak with Butter Bean Purée

If you have a non-meat eater at the table, here's what you serve them!

2 heads cauliflower
2 Tbsp olive oil
1 Tbsp barbecue sauce
1 tsp paprika
1 tsp dried parsley
1 tsp garlic powder
½ tsp salt
½ tsp black pepper
½ tsp onion powder

FOR THE BUTTER BEAN PURÉE

1 x 400 g can butter beans,
drained
2 Tbsp butter, melted
1 clove garlic
2 Tbsp fresh lemon juice
2 Tbsp fresh cream
Pinch of salt and pepper, to taste

To make the butter bean purée, add all the ingredients to a blender and blend until smooth and creamy. Set aside.

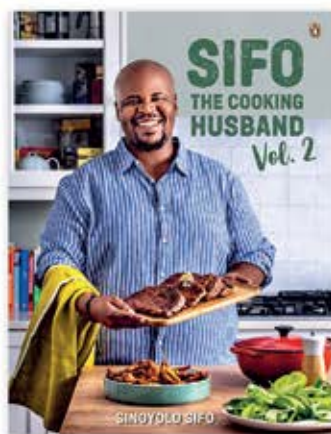
Cut the cauliflower heads into 2–3 thick slices and place onto a tray.

In a small bowl, mix together the olive oil, barbecue sauce, paprika, dried parsley, garlic powder, salt, black pepper and onion powder. Brush the mixture over the cauliflower steaks on both sides.

Place the cauliflower steaks on a hot, pre-prepared braai grill. Braai the steaks for 5–6 minutes on each side, until tender, browned

and lightly charred. Once cooked, remove from the grill. Serve over the butter bean purée and top with something like a Chimichurri.

Extracted from *Sifo The Cooking Husband Vol. 2* by Sinoyolo Sifo, out now.



SERVES
2–4

COOKING
TIME
35 MINUTES



GARDEN GREATS

Parmesan Potatoes

"The best thing about this recipe is that it can be a main meal, a side or a snack. They're so delicious, perfectly salty and crisp! If you choose to enjoy it as a main, include a simple dressed green salad on the side." – Jan Hendrik van der Westhuizen

freshly squeezed lemon juice, lemon zest, parsley or rosemary, and some extra salt and pepper. If you like, sprinkle over extra parmesan.

Extracted from *JAN Voyage*
by Jan Hendrik van der
Westhuizen, out now.



1 kg baby potatoes
80 ml olive oil
2 garlic cloves, minced
Salt and freshly ground black pepper, to taste
150 g parmesan, grated, plus extra to garnish
Juice of ½ lemon
Zest of 2 lemons
A small handful of fresh parsley, chopped, or sprigs of fresh rosemary

FEEDS
6

PREP
15 minutes

COOK
50 minutes

Bring a large pot of heavily salted water to a boil and boil the potatoes for 15–20 minutes, until tender. Do not remove the peels.

Preheat the oven to 200°C and line a baking tray with baking paper.

In a large bowl, combine the olive oil, garlic, salt, pepper and parmesan until well mixed. Toss the boiled potatoes through this mixture, then arrange the potatoes on the prepared baking tray. Crush each potato with the bottom of a heavy glass. Top the potatoes with any leftover parmesan mixture.

Bake for 25 minutes, until crispy and golden brown. Remove the potatoes from the oven and finish them with



SWEET ENDINGS

Peppermint Crisp Tiramisu

"I have a deep love for the mint-chocolate combo. I also love tiramisu, and so I present the Peppermint Crisp Tiramisu!" – Lila Lerie

250 g mascarpone, at room temperature
1 (360 g) can Nestlé Caramel Treat (dulce de leche)
¼ tsp salt
1 cup cream, whipped
24 boudoir finger biscuits
1 Tbsp instant coffee
1 cup warm water
2 Tbsp cocoa powder
2 x 49 g Peppermint Crisp chocolate bars, chopped

Whisk the mascarpone, dulce de leche and salt in a bowl until smooth.

In a separate bowl, whisk the cream to stiff peaks, and then fold into the mascarpone mixture.

Dissolve the coffee in the warm water in a shallow dish.

Add a few dollops of the mascarpone mixture to the base of a 28 x 21 cm serving dish, spreading it out evenly. Layer 12 finger biscuits on top, dipping each in the warm coffee until soft but manageable before placing them on the base.

SERVES
8



Spread half the mascarpone mixture on top, then add another layer of 12 biscuits, followed by the remaining mascarpone mixture. Finish with a generous dusting of cocoa powder and sprinkle over the chopped Peppermint Crisp chocolates.

Allow to set in the fridge for 4 hours or preferably overnight. 🕒

Extracted from *The Big Tasty Bite* by Lila Lerie, out now.



CHRISTMAS IS ABOUT TOGETHERNESS, ALWAYS

Through a nostalgic lens, Karen Dudley reflects on Christmases past – overflowing with colour, music, flavour, and family tradition. From roast potatoes to moth-eaten tinsel, each memory shines with joy and togetherness.

L leading up to Christmases past, I would suggest a toned-down celebration – perhaps a smaller tree, a simpler meal, just silver or gold trimmings. My mother would have none of it. Christmas, she insisted, is for colour! Bring out all the shiny things – even that moth-eaten tinsel from yesteryear. We go all in. And though we still fantasise about snowy Christmas Eves, we know it's hot and sunny – but we like to pretend. We dream of firs but have pines (and I'm always a little disappointed when the branches sag under all those ornaments).

On Christmas past, stories of flavour were joined by evocative smells and music. The lush fragrance of my mother's Christmas puddings (prepared a few months previously). Roast meat, spiced biscuits, mince pies, and – oh-oh-oh – my absolute favourite, the Brandy butter. The house filled with the smell of a fresh pine tree. Lights twinkling everywhere and the sweet anticipation of gifts. I have to confess that I still love all the old cheesy Christmas music, especially the children's hymns of my youth. I will even listen to Boney M along with Bing Crosby and Julie Andrews. I was fortunate enough to grow up carolling in my neighbourhood – I sing carols with a big voice!


I would know that Christmas was coming when my mother, and sometimes my mother-in-law, would make mildly panicked phone calls about the day's menu. As though there will ever be much of a departure from the usual suspects. I am a staunch traditionalist when it comes to Christmas. With one voice we say: "Yes, we want the pork roast with lots of crackling. Yes, roast turkey (even if we are always afraid it may be a bit dry). Yes, gammon. Yes, cranberry sauce *and* gravy. And of course, *yes* to roast potatoes. But yes ... to *all* of it.

Christmas Eve was at my folks, joined by my brother and his family, an aunt, a friend. Crackers, streamers and nativity scene decorations abounded. We'd ruin our appetite with *far* too many snacky things. A child would read parts from the Christmas story. Christmas records played. Once or twice, I even took out my guitar and we would sing! We'd share things we were thankful for. Even though we'd had a rule that everyone only bought one present for one special someone, my mom could never obey the rules, meaning the kids got loads of loot. And when I'd receive presents from my own parents, I'd feel like a little girl again. I think back on the year I woke up on Christmas morning to find all my dolls in new outfits, handsewn by my

mom. A real gift of devotion!

In the morning, more presents, then off to my Sweetheart's family at the Vlei for more food, laughter, and legendary roast potatoes, followed by the inevitable hankering for a nap.

In a time of less ritual and more haste, Christmas gives us pause – a moment to gather, receive, and remember grace. We celebrate those around the table, those we miss and those far away. We hold hands and we look at each other, taking simple comfort in being together.

Thinking back on Christmases past makes me a little misty, since, over the course of time, we have lost many, and our Christmas looks very different – our family smaller, the children older. But present, as always, and always forever, is the joy of being together." 

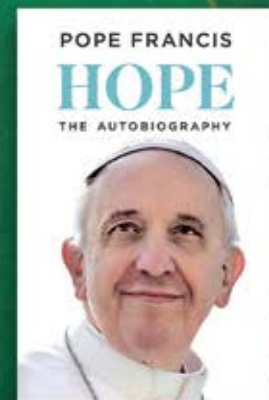
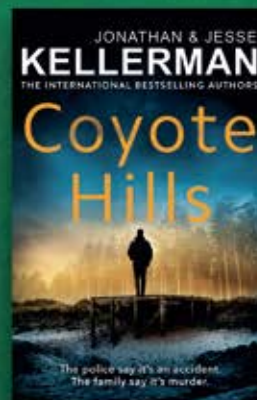
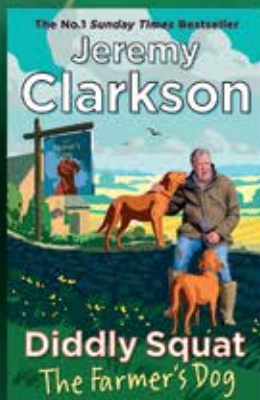
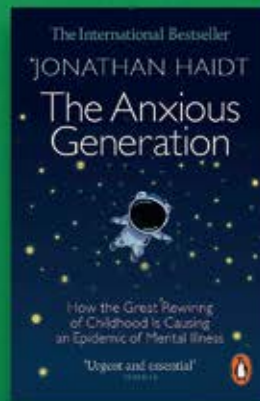
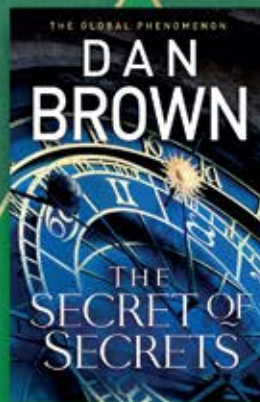


Karen's new cookbook, *Upwards* is out now.



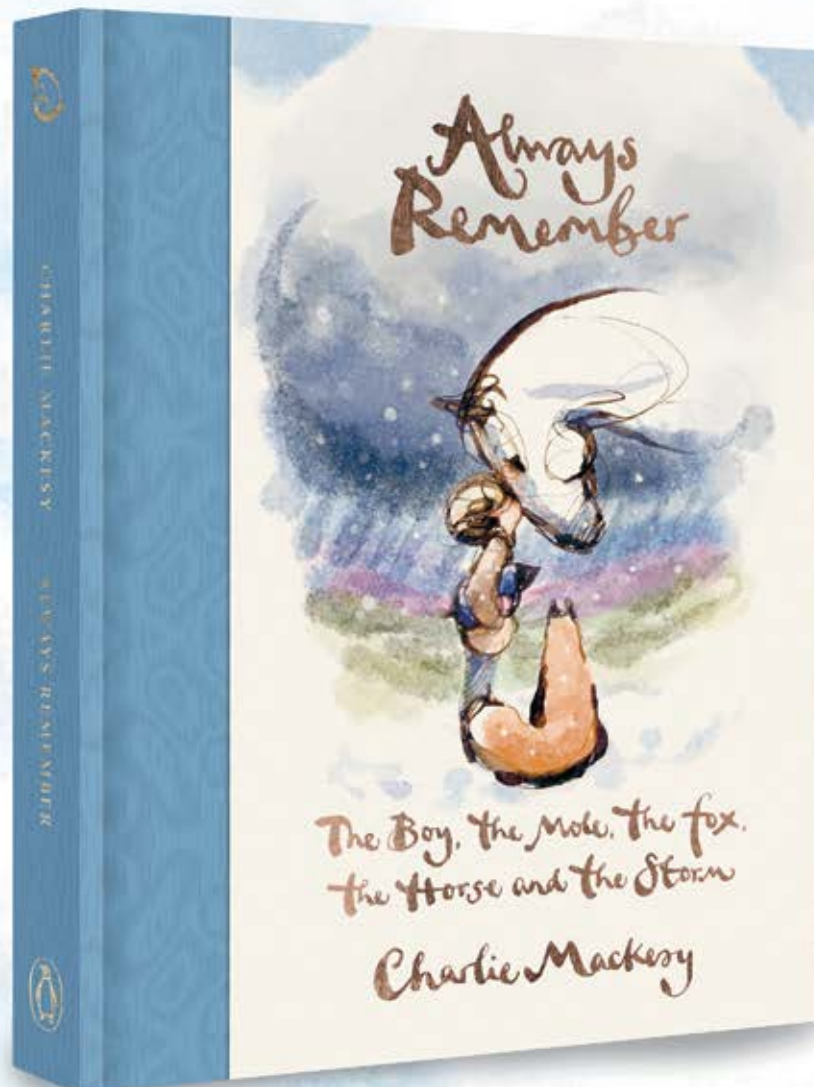
GIFTS

WORTH DROPPING HINTS ABOUT





*‘One day you’ll look back
and realise how hard it was,
and just how well you did’*



From the author of the bestselling book
that sold 10 million copies worldwide