

Starting to fade

THOMPSON and his proclivities for the bizarre need little introduction, which is a problem when reading his writing. Because most readers will be aware of the weirdness of which he is capable, any essay that fails to push the boundaries may be deemed somewhat boring. The issue with this particular collection though, is not so much that the king of gonzo is too well-behaved, but that his work is starting to show its age: Thompson's clear, sharp intelligence is still obvious, but the topics to which he applies his razor intellect are – literally – old news. Most Americans are over Nixon (a major force throughout this collection), and the rest of the planet gave up discussing the disgraced president decades ago. What Thompson did well – revealing the often unpleasant but always fascinating reality at the core of an often unpleasant but always fascinating society (the USA) – is not as powerful as it was when it was written. This is especially so in an age when good reportage is more about the subject under scrutiny than the insecure self-obsession of the person that wrote about it.

BRUCE DENNILL

LIVES IN ISOLATION

THIS is the story of a forester family in the Kraysna district in the 20th century, up until the Forties.

Their lifestyle is dictated by the severity of nature, the hardship of eking out a living and the social demands of their small settlement.

Their lives follow a strict pattern from which it is hard to deviate.

Church doctrine, public opinion and consent are the social forces that are determinant within a narrow code of conduct.

The family lives in relative isolation from the outside world and, only gradually, do the realities of great changes in South Africa penetrate.

With the forest depleted, a new way of life – to which they must adapt – forces itself on them.

Big Dan and Sofie are faced with realities that make them change their viewpoints on many issues.

This book is about a community in transition.

DRIES BRUNT



DAVID CASSIDY AND KID

ALLISON Pearson takes us on a vivid journey back to 1974. Fourteen-year-old Petra Williams is obsessively in love with singing sensation David Cassidy.

It is through her idol that she learns the hard truths, about love, heartache, friendship and the awkwardness of adolescence. During a time when teenage girls were trying to fit in with their peers and make peace with their maturing bodies, David Cassidy seemed to be the only constant in their lives.

This thread binds unlikely characters into a friendship with light-hearted consequences.

Fast-forward to 1998 and Petra is older and wiser. Once again, Cassidy crops up to play a pivotal role in her adult life.

It is through him she meets Bill, a writer who once worked at the *Ultimate David Cassidy* magazine, where his job was to write letters as though he was Cassidy.

Pearson paints a poignant coming-of-age tale that cleverly and tactfully deals with teenage angst and adult discontentment. This is not your typical chick-lit story.

It gives remarkable insight into the human condition.



I Think I Love You by Allison Pearson (Chatto & Windus), R205. ISBN: 9780701177331



The Great Shark Hunt by Hunter S. Thompson (Pan Macmillan), R136. ISBN: 9780330510776

A LOVE TO DIE FOR

"LOVE never dies." Lauren Kate's romantic story will capture the imagination of readers who enjoy reading about love between supernatural heroes and vulnerable mortals.

Lucinda Price is mortal. Her boyfriend, Daniel, is an angel who fights the forces of evil. His love for Lucinda results in an eternal curse. They will meet up in many lifetimes but Lucinda has been cursed to die each time they rekindle their love. Daniel's mission is to ensure that Lucinda will not die in *this* lifetime.

Kate has created powerful characters with tormented souls. Demons, angels and the dark forces create a fantastical backdrop for Lucinda and Daniel's eternal love.

Torment is the thrilling sequel to *Fallen*. Readers may not understand the storyline without reading the first book.

Torment is a page-turner but can result in frustration because there is another sequel in 2011.

ULRIKE HILL



Torment by Lauren Kate (Random House), R168.95. ISBN: 978038561809

FAMILIAR SCENARIO

A STORY that so many South Africans today will be able to relate to and associate with, *The Ice On Mars* is about a man who has to live with a deep-seated sorrow and a burning hatred.

His daughter is killed in cross-fire shooting in a cash-in-transit heist.

This has the effect of changing him from a previously loving and caring father to turning into a lonesome, vengeful individual.

He is caught up in a psychological struggle from which there is little chance of escape and little hope of overcoming this personal tragedy.

His actions become irrational when he tries to establish whether the shooting that killed his daughter had come from police or criminal firing, as if that matters.

A stray bullet that kills someone is just that.

The scenario created by Badal is one in which he can elucidate his sentiments on South African politics, criminality and police effectiveness, which he does in no uncertain terms.

The story is hauntingly tragic.

DRIES BRUNT



The Ice On Mars by Sean Badal (Wigan Pier), R160. ISBN: 9780620465281

ADVENTURING INTO A FAMILY'S PAST

BRIGITTE Nicholson, a university admissions officer, has spent most of her life being safe. No great ambitions, grand plans, no passion, just comfortable predictability. Until fate steps in.

Within a short space of time she loses her job, her man and her bearings. She travels to her mother whose love of tracing her family history has Brigitte unlocking the secrets of her aristocratic heritage.

As she discovers more about Wachwi, the Sioux woman who captured the heart of a marquis, Brigitte opens the door to adventure, and quite possibly, to love.

Legacy follows their dual story.

Somewhat formulaic, this novel is a pleasant and easy holiday read – nothing special.

SUZANNE JEFFERIES



Legacy by Danielle Steel (Bantam) R215. ISBN: 9780593063033

MAN OF SUCCESS AND CONTROVERSY

BIOGRAPHER Randy Taraborelli knew the late Michael Jackson for over 30 years.

He introduces the young Jackson as a child star with his brothers in The Jackson 5, who were famous in their time at the top.

It was clear that Jackson would grow up to be a force to be reckoned with.

His music transcended gender and race across the world.

His family and personal life came under great scrutiny.

Although Taraborelli talks about the relationship he had with his family – which was not always great – Jackson seemed to have led a troubled life despite his success and controversy followed him to his death.

DENISE MHLANGA



Michael Jackson: The Magic, The Madness, The Whole Story by Randy Taraborelli (Pan MacMillan), R120. ISBN: 9780330515655

BAD MARRIAGES DAMAGED WOMEN

THE deepest cut a wife can experience is when she finds out her husband is having an affair. The story of a deceitful marriage is sad. The wife hangs in there in spite of SMSes on his cellphone that knock the wind out of her sails. The denials and half-truths all derail a marriage.

This book is about women's experiences in bad marriages. *An Affair To Forget* is like reading through personal diaries.

Illicit sex happens in hotels, cars, even in their own marital beds. For the cheat, the affair is everything, but the damaged wife still wants to cling to him.

This book is moving, talking about the men who cheat and the women who wait with their hearts in their mouths.

DEE ANDREW



An Affair To Forget – A True Story by Marie Opperman (Zebra), R190. ISBN: 97917729040

LIFE WITH THE RICH AND FAMOUS

BILLED as a mix of *Sex And The City* and *The Devil Wears Prada*, this book almost lives up to its promise.

Monique, Sophie, Christopher and Samantha arrive in Paris in the Sixties. Each one dreams of working for Coco Chanel, who is known to all who work for her as Mademoiselle.

Monique is a superb seamstress and Samantha, an American publicist. Christopher is a handsome heterosexual English designer, and Sophie is the beautiful model, with a secretive past, who becomes the face of Chanel.

All four characters bear witness to the last days of Coco Chanel and the death of Haute Couture.

The book is not particularly well written. However, the interesting characters, setting and incidents are fascinating.

AMANDA PATTERSON



Heaven, Hell & Mademoiselle by Harold Carton (Orion), R154. ISBN: 9781409115182