

{ BOOKS }

Gone: A Girl, a Violin, a Life Unstrung ★★★★★
Min Kym (Penguin Random House, R340)

THERE are two protagonists at the centre of Min Kym's acute memoir; Min the person and Min the violinist. The two are inseparable, until one day when Min the violinist is wrenched away from Min the person.

From the start the reader knows that something is amiss. You can sense the aching void in the narrator as she recounts the story of how she became Min, without a violin. It starts in the 1980s. Min-Jin Kym and her family move from Korea to London, where her father works for Daewoo. Min accompanies her older sister to piano lessons, but doesn't get to play. One day, her mother asks her if she wants to play something. The piano is already taken, but perhaps the violin?

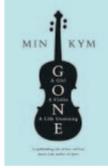
That is how Min becomes a child prodigy. Everything she plays shimmers with hope and promise. She has perfect pitch. However, when her father is recalled to Korea she must give up the violin. Sensing the heartache in his daughter, her father goes against his family, against his very Korean-ness, and moves Min, her mother and sister back to London where she has a better chance of becoming an artist.

Tucked away in the folds of the memoir are the things Min doesn't spell out in words: the sacrifices she makes to live up to expectation, the damage inflicted on a young child who just wants to play the violin.



THE SILENT VIOLINIST

Min Kym's memoir tells a story of sacrifice, pain and separation, writes Anna Stroud



Min the child prodigy is shy and introverted. Her world revolves around her violin. She's eager to please and obedient as Korean children ought to be.

This makes her vulnerable to manipulation by people who don't have her best interests at heart.

As she grows older, Min the violinist has the world at her feet; standing ovations greet her wherever she goes. She's lived up to expectation. But Min the person is not so successful. She struggles with her personal life. She trusts the wrong people, believing that others know what's best for her.

This brings the reader to the point where Min is violently separated from her violin.

Gone: A Girl, a Violin, a Life Unstrung is told with brutal, raw honesty. This is a memoir, a true story. If you google the author and the disappearance of her 300-year-old Stradivarius which was stolen outside Euston Station in 2010, it's clear that Min's voice was never heard. Instead, men she trusted spoke for her, steering the narrative towards their own version of events.

For that reason, *Gone* is a celebration of Min's voice. Throughout the memoir, she grapples with her identity. Is she Korean, or a Londoner? Is she a girl, or an artist, or both? How to be both in a world that favours the artist? Finally she has had a chance to tell her story, in her own voice, to a captive audience: the reader. @annawriter_

book bites



Book Fiend

Nest ★★★★★
Terry Goodkind (Head of Zeus, R315)
Imagine you could spot a murderer just by looking at a photograph of his face? Not only recognise him, but know the intimate details of his crime. Kate Bishop discovers

she has this ability — as did her recently murdered brother. Then there's author Jack Raines, who is an expert on evil, with unique abilities of his own. Jack and Kate make a formidable team, posing a real threat to the world's "super-predators", but becoming targets themselves. Goodkind is famous for his epic fantasy series *The Sword of Truth* and although *Nest* is not fantasy, it's the first in a solid series. — *Aubrey Paton*



Book Buff

Born on a Tuesday ★★★★★
Elnathan John (Cassava Press, R280)
I love unadorned writing. Quite often it's more effective than the purple prose and over-writing favoured by the likes of Ben Okri. In his debut novel *Born*

on a Tuesday, the twice Caine Prize-nominated Elnathan John writes as simply as he does devastatingly. His coming-of-age novel follows the story of Dantala, a Muslim boy in northern Nigeria who finds a home first in a gang that commits atrocious acts of violence (described in detail with unerring nonchalance) and then within the belongingness of religious extremism. Dantala is reminiscent of the protagonist in Albert Camus' *The Stranger*, except instead of world-weariness, his emotional distance from the world around him seems to be the result of a lack of emotional growth. Dantala is an observer of not only others' behaviour and lives, but of his own too. This is a dark and intense read, but there's also a strange beauty at its core that shines through when you least expect it. — *Pearl Boshomane @Pearloystias*



Book Thrill

Eyes Like Mine ★★★★★
Sheena Kamal (Bonnier, R280)
Thrillers set in unusual places seem to have a certain edge — the environment being another fascinating character to get to know. This debut novel is set in Vancouver, Canada, where the constant

rain and drabness of the city in winter is another adversary that taciturn loner Nora Watts has to deal with. She is contacted by the parents of Bonnie, a teenage girl she gave up for adoption as a baby and who is now missing. Nora has to confront what happened to her 15 years ago and how to save Bonnie from her violent past. At first, the story is dense and Nora's character is not easy to like but then she becomes firmly stuck in your mind — like Lisbeth Salander in Stieg Larsson's books. Thank goodness Kamal is writing a sequel. — *Jennifer Platt @Jenniferplatt*



Book Thrill

The Child Garden ★★★★★
Catriona McPherson (Little, Brown, R200)
Gloria's small and simple life is changed when she narrowly avoids a head-on collision with her childhood crush, Stig. The meeting leads them to poking around at the

secrets surrounding a 30-year-old tragedy. As truths begin to emerge, it becomes clear that what began with only a single life lost is still claiming bodies to this day. This bucolic Scotland has a sinister edge, where rocking stones are rumoured to house the devil and bridges might steal your soul. An eerie tale with more twists and turns than a garden maze. — *Tiah Beautement @ms_tiahmarie*

{ BOOKS }



Jacket Notes

Jassy Mackenzie on writing with James Patterson

WRITING a James Patterson-branded Bookshots thriller was an incredible experience, made extra challenging by the short format. A normal length novel is 75 000 to 100 000 words — a Bookshots novel is only 25 000 — but there has to be just as much action in the Bookshots.

To start with, I had to submit a synopsis good enough to persuade Patterson to consider the full manuscript. This meant I had to throw my hero, Joey Montague, right into the thick of things, and make sure trouble kept on coming.

There can be no uncluttered person, I discovered, than the star of a Bookshots thriller. I thought I'd made Joey's life as bad as it could be, with a side order of life-threatening disaster for Isobel, the female lead — but the message came back from Patterson: We like it, but more action in the first half, please.

Back to the drawing board I went, and erased the only moment of peace and quiet that Joey had. Instead, he became the victim of an attempted mugging during a violent thunderstorm.

I wanted the book to have a topical theme. Since it was set in Joburg, I decided to tackle the subject of illegal gold mining. I was fascinated to learn how prevalent it is and how much crime



When Patterson read the full manuscript, he thought it would work as part of his famous Private series

occurs as a result. It's a high-risk activity undertaken by desperate people. Toiling in the dark, they risk suffocation, injury, being trapped under the surface, or being murdered by rival gangs.

Originally, I called the book *26 Degrees South*, after the co-ordinates of the mine Joey helps Isobel reach when she suspects foul play. However, when Patterson read the full manuscript, he thought it would work as part of his famous Private series. Instead of being an independent PI, Joey could head up the SA branch of Private, the international investigation firm.

I went ahead with the changes. Luckily, the book's short format made this easier. Changes like this might sound small and simple, but they have a knock-on effect and can mean many hours of rewriting, and rethinking.

The new title was originally *Private Johannesburg*, but given the subject matter, the team decided *Private Gold* would work even better. I loved it — short, catchy and descriptive.

Having written in collaboration with James Patterson, I can also say, confidentially, that midway through the edits, as we were sitting side by side at his big mahogany desk, he leaned towards me and whispered that I must please call him Jim.

That's not true, actually. But then, I am a fiction writer. **Private Gold is published by Penguin Random House, R60.**

LINK LOVE: Book fun
See how many of these books you can identify from their famous lines. Go to <http://bit.ly/quotequiz>

BOOKSLIVE most viewed: Sisonke Msimang's memoir to be released in October



JONATHAN Ball Publishers has won a fierce bidding battle for Sisonke Msimang's memoir and first book, acquiring Southern African rights from agent Isobel Dixon at Blake Friedmann, London.

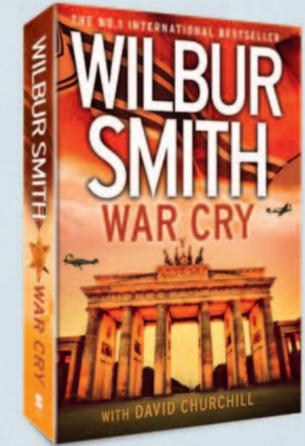
Jonathan Ball will publish the memoir, *Always Another Country*, in October 2017. Msimang is one of the most assured voices commenting on SA now — often humorously; sometimes deeply movingly. Jonathan Ball publisher Ester Levinrad is



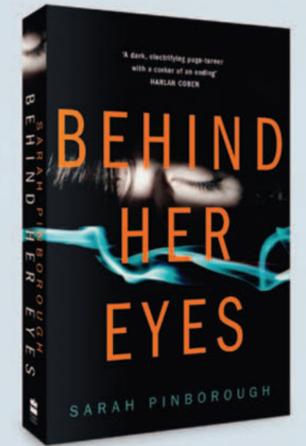
potential which defies borders. Sisonke's writing helps me to make sense not only of the country but the world in which we live." Msimang writes about her exile childhood in Zambia and Kenya, young

adulthood and college years in North America, and return to South Africa in the euphoric '90s. She reflects candidly on her discontent and disappointment with present-day South Africa but also on her experiences of family, romance, and motherhood, with the novelist's talent for character and pathos. Her bitter-sweet memoir is at heart a chronicle of a coming-of-age. Dixon says: "While well-known political figures appear in these pages, it is an intimate story, a testament to family bonds and sisterhood."

For more, go to www.bookslive.co.za



A thrilling tale of espionage, adventure and danger, set in Africa and spanning from the Great War's end to the dark days of World War II.

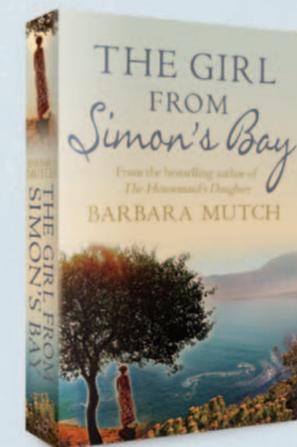


'If *Behind Her Eyes* isn't the thriller of the year, there is no justice. Hugely entertaining, utterly compelling and the ending will leave you reeling.' — Sarah Lotz

WIN

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Set in South Africa, Barbara Mutch's second novel is a moving account of a love affair battling the social and political upheavals of World War II.



'In a book where nothing is as it appears, one thing is certain: *Caraval* is the darkly enchanting adventure you've been looking for!' — Kiersten White, author of *Paranormalcy*

Memoir from a midwife of our history

Patriots & Parasites: South Africa and the Struggle to Evade History ★★★★★
Dene Smuts (Quivertree, R295)



There is none of the score-settling that can mar political memoirs — although she takes no prisoners

IT'S always a challenge to finalise a book whose author dies before it is quite complete. Books emerging from the resulting valedictory labours of love are often flawed, but no less valuable. Dene Smuts's daughter, Julia Smuts Louw, herself a writer of exceptional flair, probably has something to do with the elegance of this book — which has also been carefully copy edited. It was she who chose the title, taken from Emily Hobhouse's words describing "those who live in the country, and love it, and those who live on it".

Nevertheless, for those familiar with Smuts's writing from her journalism days, there is no mistaking her forthright and mordantly funny voice, her ability to skewer, her crisp prose. Her account of the property clause in the Constitution as "a kind of mermaid [with a] long and fishy tail of subclause after subclause" is vintage Smuts.

This memoir, a history of 25 years in Parliament and a

valuable account of the making of the Constitution, is an important marker on the map of South African political analysis. The reminders of what many of us have forgotten or never knew, and her trademark fearlessness more than compensate for the unpolished or truncated passages.

Smuts wrote this book after her "retirement" in 2014, with characteristic passion for her ideals, but surprising lack of heat given that she often describes herself as "incensed" or "incandescent with rage". There is none of the score-settling that can mar



political memoirs — although she takes no prisoners. Thabo Mbeki, in particular, is not spared, although her critique of his legacy focuses on his interest in keeping open the wounds of racism, rather than his shameful obtuseness on HIV/Aids, which cost hundreds of thousands of people their lives.

One might not agree with Smuts's liberal politics, and I remain unconvinced by her arguments on hate and "hurt" speech — it is not enough to dismiss the Sparrows of this world as pathetic and irrelevant — but there is no denying the integrity of her principles, and the terrier-like tenacity with which she guarded those principles — particularly equality — as part of the backbone of the post-1994 political dispensation.

For those idealistic about our Constitution, reading Smuts's insights into the horse-trading, panel-beating, and vigilance that was necessary to enshrine and safeguard it in its current form, is eye-opening. As the ConCourt swooped recently to save the poorest of South Africans from the Sassa grants morass, with a judgment stingingly critical of the executive bungling, incompetence, arrogance and worse, this book reminds us of how much we owe those, like Smuts, who insisted on the robustness and clarity of constitutional rights.

Increasingly, as we look to our courts to save us from an unaccountable and uncaring government, we have reason to be grateful to the midwives of our legislation.

Smuts did an extraordinary job in extraordinary times, and her memoir disproves the truism about it being best not to know what goes into the making of laws and sausages: her account of the gristle, filler and corn syrup that went into our key legislation also reveals the warm spice contributed by remarkable individuals and a unique history. — *Helen Moffet @heckitty*