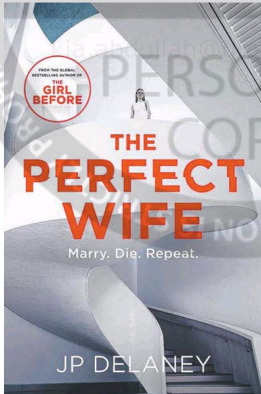


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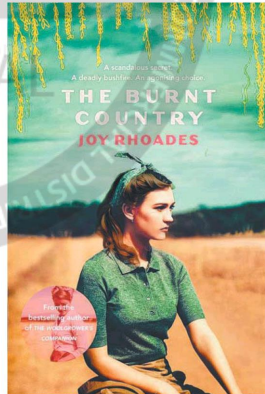
FROM THE AUTHOR OF THE WOOLGROWER'S COMPANION
COMES A STAND-ALONE SEQUEL STARRING THE AUSTRALIAN
HEROINE WE SUMMON IN TRYING TIMES



THE PERFECT WIFE
J.P. Delaney
HACHETTE, \$33

Silicon Valley, the expanding world of artificial intelligence and the geeks who inhabit it, is the setting for this mindbending thriller. But it's not a futuristic tale lacking heart and soul. Tim Scott, founder of Scott Robotics, lost his wife Abbie in mysterious circumstances. His solution to the hole left in his life and that of their autistic son Danny? To recreate Abbie as a perfect wife and mother in cobot (companion robot) form, uploading her memories and "intelligence" from social media, photos and videos. She also has the capacity to fill in gaps between these uploads to allow decision-making and even emotion. But that also means Abbie starts to question her resumed life and the devotion of her husband, along with the treatment. Tim has chosen for Danny. J.P. Delaney steps into a tech minefield, alongside the challenges of autism, which he later reveals sits close to home. It's a riveting read that opens our eyes to the perils of the future.

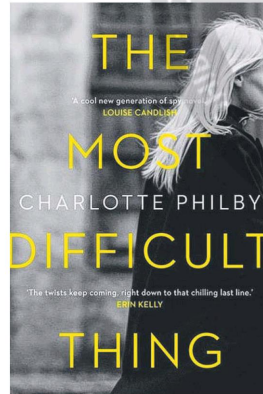
CARINA BRUCE
VERDICT: Future shock



THE BURNT COUNTRY
Joy Rhoades
BANTAM AUSTRALIA, \$33

From the author of *The Woolgrower's Companion* comes this stand-alone sequel of a choice, a secret and a raging fire. Set in Australia in 1948, Kate Dowd is fighting for a voice in a man's world as she battles to keep Amiens, the family sheep farm passed down after the sudden death of her father. The local community has isolated her following a wartime scandal and ridicules her efforts to burn off in preparation of the looming summer heat. Her estranged husband Jack then stumbles into town demanding a divorce and that Kate sell the farm despite it being her livelihood and the only way to protect her half-sister Pearl from being ripped from her family by the Aborigines Welfare Board. Queensland-born author Joy Rhoades' story of battling fires on all fronts — emotional and physical — is inspired by stories of her grandmother, a fifth-generation grazier, and tells of a post-war resilience, with many of the themes facing farming communities today.

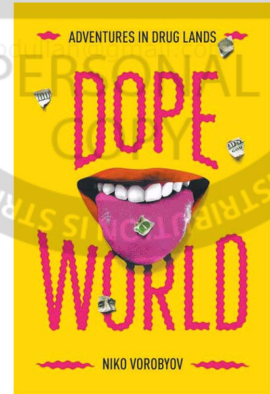
GRACE MCKINNON
VERDICT: Inspiring resilience



THE MOST DIFFICULT THING
Charlotte Philby
HARPERCOLLINS, \$30

Penned by the granddaughter of notorious double agent Kim Philby, this espionage/domestic thriller begins with an intriguing lure as highflying magazine editor Anna plots to abandon her family after living a double life. Anna's intense yet unrealistic infatuation with an older journalist sees her being manipulated into spying on her future father-in-law's work affairs — a family drama exacerbated when she unexpectedly falls pregnant and husband David is roped into the family business. Cue Maria, a woman from David's past, whose chilling narration adds an unexpected dimension to Anna's web of lies. Author Charlotte Philby has a way with words — eyes are clawlike, a mother's song seeps like gas — but the over-descriptions can make for an exhausting read in parts. Despite a sluggish start, the twists and red herrings sprinkled throughout make this novel a page-turner right through to the cliffhanger ending.

ELIZA SUM
VERDICT: Domestic intrigue



DOPE WORLD
Niko Vorobyov
HODDER AND STOUGHTON, \$30

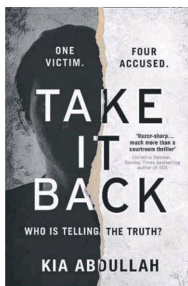
Niko Vorobyov started selling drugs at rave parties while he was still at high school in England. He points out he wasn't exploiting addicts. He was only selling to well-to-do university students and hipsters who not only wanted the stuff, but were willing to pay for it. After getting caught and being sent to jail, he decided to become a "subversive scholar", reading everything he could about drugs, from the history of their use to the international multibillion-dollar business they are today. On his release, Vorobyov travelled the world investigating who makes drugs, who sells them and who uses them. What's different about this book is that it is written by someone who doesn't judge, or start with the assumption that he's exploring something that is wrong. "Just because something is illegal, doesn't make it immoral," Vorobyov writes. Ultimately it is his candid honesty that makes this book so alarmingly insightful.

JEFF MAYNARD
VERDICT: Compulsive

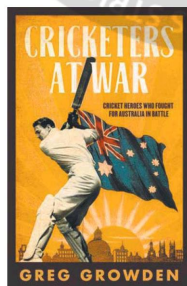
ON THE SHELF

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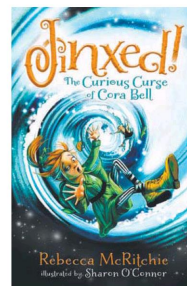
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TAKE IT BACK
Kia Abdullah
\$32.99
It's time to take your place on the jury. The victim: A 16-year-old girl with facial deformities, neglected by an alcoholic mother, who accuses the boys of something unthinkable. The defendants: Four handsome teenage boys from hardworking immigrant families. All with corroborating stories. Whose side would you take?



CRICKETERS AT WAR
Greg Rowden
\$32.99
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JINXED! THE CURIOUS CURSE OF CORA BELL
Rebecca McRitchie
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