

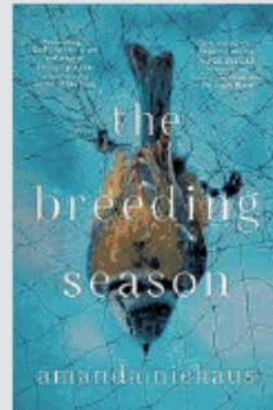


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**FICTION**  
**THE BREEDING SEASON**  
**AMANDA NIEHAUS**  
**ALLEN & UNWIN, \$30**



Creative fiction courses often advise students: "Write what you know about." Brisbane debut author Amanda Niehaus deserves a big

introduction – and this deeply resonant work is it – but she needs no such instruction. If any author ventured to show how the animal world is replete with examples of females controlling males, it could only help to have a PhD in ecological physiology (Niehaus does). To describe the searing effect of cancer diagnosis on both patient and loved ones, they would be substituting virtuosity for veracity unless it'd happened to them (to her, it did). Dan and Elise are lovers. A humanities man, he is ghostwriting his eccentric artist uncle's memoirs. Elise is an academic in the science stream. A central theme is how like seeks out unlike. This debut novel is complex but never obscure. Plot summary would require a spoiler alert – and scarcely do it justice. Set in Brisbane (but ranging from Tasmania to the Top End), their love story is begun and (pun alert) nearly book-ended by tragedy. A masterpiece in 30 compact chapters deserves equal economy of description, so let me list some of the topics it covers: sex, death, maternity, bunya nuts ("a Queensland secret"), fishing in the tropics, male bitchiness, hallucination, stillbirth and rebirth. Something for everyone, in other words – everyone who has known loss but clings to hope.

**KEN HALEY**

**Dr Amanda Niehaus will appear at Brisbane libraries: Chermanside on November 7; Bulimba on November 9; and Kenmore on November 14**