**Fiction – a selection of our favourites**

*also available as a talking book*

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**Rain birds / Harriet McKnight (2017)**

Alan and Pina have lived contentedly in isolated – and insular – Boney Point for thirty years. Now they are dealing with Alan’s devastating early-onset Alzheimer’s diagnosis. As he is cast adrift in the depths of his own mind, Pina is left to face the consequences alone, until the arrival of a flock of black cockatoos seems to tie him, somehow, to the present.

Nearby, conservation biologist Arianna Brandt is involved in a project trying to reintroduce the threatened glossy black cockatoos into the wilds of Murrungowar National Park. Alone in the haunted bush, and with her birds failing to thrive, Arianna’s personal demons start to overwhelm her and risk undoing everything.

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**The gingerbread house / Kate Beaufoy (2017)**

Recently-redundant Tess is keen to start work on a novel and needs to make it work. She and her freelance journalist husband Donn desperately need the money and three weeks looking after Donn’s aged mother while the carer takes a break seems like an opportunity to get started. She knows it’ll be tough looking after Eleanor, who has increasingly severe dementia, but she’ll surely find some time for herself, won’t she?

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**Forgetting Foster / Dianne Touchell (2016)**

‘Foster suddenly recognised the feeling that rolled over him and made him feel sick. It was this: Dad was going away somewhere all on his own. And Foster was already missing him.’ Foster Sumner is seven years old. He likes toy soldiers, tadpole hunting, going to school and the beach. But then Foster’s dad starts forgetting things. No one is too worried at first. Foster and Dad giggle about it. But the forgetting gets worse. And suddenly no one is laughing anymore. A heartbreaking story about what it means to forget and to be forgotten.

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**Still Alice / Lisa Genova (2009)**

Alice Howland is proud of the life she worked so hard to build. A Harvard professor, she has a successful husband and three grown children. When she begins to grow forgetful, she dismisses it for as long as she can, but when she gets lost in her own neighbourhood she knows that something has gone terribly wrong. She finds herself in the rapidly downward spiral of Alzheimer’s disease. She is fifty years old. Suddenly she has no classes to teach, no new research to conduct, no invited lectures to give. Alice struggles to find meaning and purpose in her everyday life as her concept of self gradually changes.

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**Inside the O’Briens / Genova, Lisa (2015)**

Joe O’Brien is a Boston cop; his physical stamina and methodical mind have seen him through decades policing the city streets, while raising a family with his wife Rosie. When he starts committing uncharacteristic errors - mislaying his police weapon, trouble writing up reports, slurred speech - he attributes them to stress. Finally, he agrees to see a doctor and is handed a terrifying, unexpected diagnosis: Huntington’s disease. His daughter Katie wrestles with how to make the most of the here and now, and how to care for her dad who is, inside, always an O’Brien.
Losing my marbles / Marian Penman (2010)
We meet Susan in July 2000 as she describes the moment she knew she was attracted to a married colleague. James owned a string of gift shops and Susan managed one of them. It was not long before their twice-weekly catch-ups became something more intimate over a glass of wine or two. It was also not long before their affair became full blown and James’s wife blew the lid.

Our next story is told through the eyes of Susan’s mother, Joan, and it’s now December 2000. She is quite worried about her daughter and thinks she’s beginning menopause as she is starting to forget names and walks around with what she describes as a ‘pudding head’.

Elizabeth is missing: a novel / Emma Healey (2014) *
Maud, an aging grandmother, is slowly losing her memory—and her grip on everyday life. Yet she refuses to forget her best friend Elizabeth, whom she is convinced is missing and in terrible danger. But no one will listen to Maud—not her frustrated daughter, Helen, not her caretakers, not the police, and especially not Elizabeth’s mercurial son, Peter. Armed with handwritten notes she leaves for herself and an overwhelming feeling that Elizabeth needs her help, Maud resolves to discover the truth and save her beloved friend.

We are not ourselves / Matthew Thomas (2014) *
This novel is heavy on the messy, claustrophobic fog of family life. It is by turns wrenching in its portrait of a family battling illness and plodding in its depiction of the sociological realities of mid-century middle-class American life. At its centre is Eileen Tumulty, who grows up in a working-class Irish enclave of Queens, New York. When she meets her husband, Ed, a young neuroscientist, she believes she is finally climbing the ladder into the respectable upper-middle-class. But then in midlife, just as the couple’s son is entering his teens, Ed is diagnosed with young onset Alzheimer’s disease.

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