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PUBLISHED:

JEFF POPPLE

Nowhere Man. By John M.Green. Pantera. 379pp.

\$32.99.

John Green's highly polished debut novel starts out as a financial thriller based on the events of the recent global crisis, before veering into stranger territory. When Sonya Hunt's secretive stock-trader husband, Michael, vanishes from their waterfront Sydney home leaving her with millions in debt, her life is thrown into chaos. Things only become worse when the economy collapses and the police begin to raise questions about Michael's activities. Lost and lonely, Sonya stumbles on some strange computer files that provide the key to repaying her debts, but which also raise some troubling questions about Michael. Spurred into action, Sonya travels to America to find Michael and solve the mystery of the files. Nowhere Man is a clever, interesting novel that delivers a stunning mid-book twist and a totally unexpected ending that will leave readers divided in their views. One of the most surprising thrillers of the year. The Delta. By Tony Park. Macmillan. 486pp.

\$32.99.

Tony Park is one of Australia's best thriller writers and his African-based novels are consistently entertaining and thought-provoking. His latest opens with an ex-soldier turned mercenary, Sonja Kurtz, attempting to assassinate the president of Zimbabwe. When the attempt spectacularly fails, Sonja flees to the Okavango Delta in the heart of Botswana where her childhood sweetheart, Stirling Smith, runs a safari camp. Sonja discovers, however, that things are far from peaceful in the delta and she soon finds herself caught up in a violent conflict over a dam that threatens the delta's future. Drawing on recent events in Africa, and the looming prospect of future wars caused by climate change and dwindling water resources, The Delta is a gripping thriller that smoothly mixes intense action scenes with vivid descriptions of the African countryside and its people. A good, although unnecessarily long, read. The Lucifer Code. By Charles Brokaw. Penguin.

516pp. \$32.95.

The Lucifer Code is another overlong thriller that could have done with some judicious editing. Once more featuring famed historian and ancient language expert Dr Thomas Lourds, the Indiana Jones-like hero of Brokaw's last book The Atlantis Code, this is a fast-paced thriller that races from one breathless scene to another. Set primarily in Turkey, it revolves around an ancient holy scroll that only the intrepid Dr Lourds can decipher. Guarded by a sacred brotherhood, the much sought-after scroll has the power to unleash doomsday upon the world. The action is largely preposterous, but the archaeological detail and the theological explanations are interesting, and Lourds is an enjoyably roguish hero.

Canberra Times