



Courier Mail
11/02/2012
Page: 22
By: Jane Fynes-Clinton
Section: Life
Region: Brisbane Circulation: 194949
Type: Capital City Daily
Size: 109.00 sq.cms
Frequency: MTWTFS-

WHAT REMAINS

Denise Leith
Allen & Unwin, \$29.99

IT IS a shame that there is no official book category called faction - fiction built around facts.

If such a thing existed, *What Remains* would fit it perfectly.

Historically positioned, politically insightful and sharply real, this is ostensibly a story of love in times of war and catastrophe, but to leave it at that would be to sell it short.

What Remains follows the adult life and career of Australian journalist Kate Price from her first war assignment in Saudi Arabia and Iraq in 1991 until a posting in 2004 to cover the aftermath of the invasion of Iraq. It also ventures into the extraordinary places she reported on in between.

While the wartime imagery is bold and uncomfortable in places, it is not gratuitous and part of the story's appeal is its realism.

Kate's evolution from keen, engaged novice to numb, cynical veteran is so believable it hurts the reader to travel into the world's bloody, cruel war zones with her.

Underpinned by a strong factual skeleton, life is breathed into *What Remains* by small, tender incidents and moments and the most profound of human needs, love.

This is love in the real world, not the squishy stuff of forgettable romance novels; love within friendships forged by shared trauma, compassionate love for those forced into a conflict, and most importantly burgeoning love between Kate and photographer Pete McDermott.

This startlingly good first novel is frightening, compelling, touching.

VERDICT: BALANCED DOSES OF

LOVE AND REALITY

Jane Fynes-Clinton

