

THE SILENT COUNTRY

AUTHOR // Di Morrissey

PUBLISHER // Pan Macmillan

Australia, \$32.99

It's great that there are still writers turning out true-blue, great Aussie sagas. Peter Yeldham, Patricia Shaw and Di Morrissey are among the leaders in the field and the latter is particularly prolific. Of course, there's Bryce Courtenay too, who also has a book out for Christmas – *The Story of Danny Dunn* – a yarn about the travails of a returned World War II soldier. Di Morrissey's book is also timed for the Yuletide market and this time around she grapples with a Burke and Wills type of tragedy, although the expedition that went horribly wrong is more contemporary and involves eccentric Russian film director Maxim Topov. When making a film about the Outback with a team of what we used to call "new Australians", Topov ran into trouble in Australia's remote top end. Fifty years on and television executive Veronica Anderson is intrigued to learn about the expedition and decides to investigate. She locates the remaining survivors but finds them reluctant to talk about what really happened. This air of mystery only makes Veronica more determined and so she retraces their footsteps with the help of environmentalist Jamie McIntosh. Piecing together this puzzle from the past, she finds answers along the way that will cause her to question her own values and priorities in life. A lot of contemporary fiction and poetry is urban-based and so it's great that writers such as Di Morrissey are still writing about the romance, mystery and dangers of our continent beyond the city limits.

