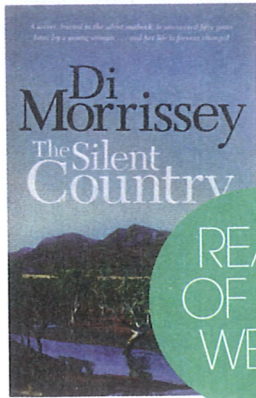


BOOK REVIEWS

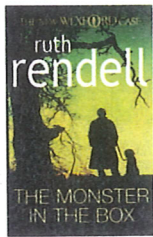
Our Fiction Editor Julie Redlich reviews the latest books



The Silent Country, by Di Morrissey, Pan Macmillan, rrp \$32.99.

Once more, Di Morrissey takes us to a part of Australia that is remote, beautiful and full of secrets. When TV executive Veronica Anderson finds a 50-year-old movie, she is compelled to find out more about the Russian director who longed to show the extraordinary Australian landscape to the world. But his crew were mainly New Australians

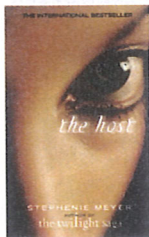
who had no idea what to expect, and the ending to their trip is more than mysterious. Now Veronica finds that none of the expedition's survivors are prepared to talk. Joining forces with environmentalist Jamie McIntosh, they go to the Top End to solve the questions that have remained unanswered for years. Highly recommended for holiday reading – if you can wait until then. Bet you can't!



The Monster In The Box, by Ruth Rendell, Hutchinson, rrp \$32.95.

A welcome return to the world of Chief Inspector Wexford and the good, and occasionally bad, people of Kings Markham. In his early days in the force, Wexford's instincts told him that one man was guilty of killing two women, but nothing could be proved. Now that man is back,

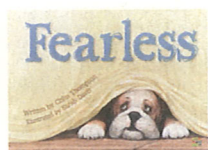
strutting about, and still challenging Wexford with unbearable confidence. There's a great build-up of tension as past passions surface.



The Host, by Stephanie Meyer, Sphere, rrp \$24.99.

In case you missed its earlier publication, this stand-alone novel by the phenomenal *Twilight* author is now in paperback. When an alien species invades Earth, one of them, The Wanderer, takes possession of Melanie, a dying girl. Trying to find the last human survivors, The Wanderer has to confront Melanie's

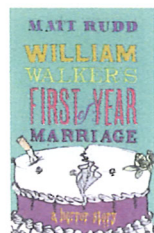
amazingly strong spirit. A great read, and the movie rights have been sold – something to look forward to after *The Twilight Saga: New Moon*.



Fearless, by Colin Thompson, ABC Books, rrp \$24.99.

A delightful tale for kids (and big kids) about how some people, and dogs, can be given a name that is completely

wrong. Sarah Davis's gorgeous pictures help to tell how a little puppy (with a rather small brain) wasn't fearless at all until the one night he became a crime-stopper. Could it be that his name is completely right?

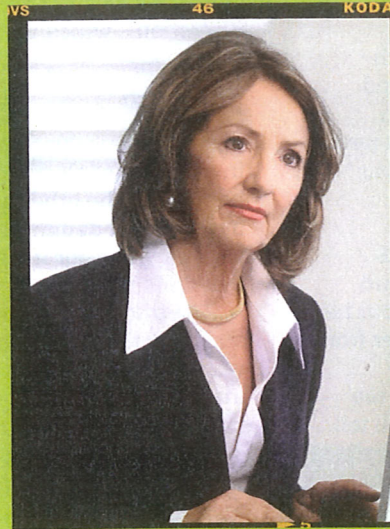


William Walker's First Year Of Marriage, by Matt Rudd, HarperCollins, rrp \$24.99.

It's subtitled "a horror story", but forget any spine-chilling shivers. Think rather of controlling your laughter as William tells us about the start of happy-ever-after ... until a few ghosts of the past turn up.

THE MIDDLETONS

Janet gets a tempting offer



The sun set behind us, casting shadows across the ramparts of the Blue Mountains, turning the clouds a glorious pink.

Hamish Drysdale handed me a glass of riesling.

"One of my favourites," I said. "This is heaven. I feel guilty, being waited on hand and foot."

Hamish sat down next to me. "Relax and enjoy. You've had a really rotten week."

I sighed. "That whole hostage situation and Glen Thompson's suicide seem so unreal. What drives a man to terrify his wife, then take his own life because he's lost money on the stock market?"

"He wasn't ruined. He was just not among the mega rich any more. Some men feel they always have to be right and can't face up to the suggestion that they might have made a mistake. He blamed his wife when things went wrong. After all those years of a business and marriage partnership, when she dug her heels in, he went berserk."

"Talking of going off the deep end," said Hamish, "did you manage to soothe your mother's ruffled feathers?"

I smiled. "When I finally told her about Margaret's ovarian cancer and what Charlie was going through, she was a little more sympathetic."

"Charlie was always her favourite, so she could almost accept that his problems might take precedent over

her Christmas plans."

I stared up into the darkening sky. "Her favouring Charlie wasn't so bad when my father was alive, but my teenage years were rough. Mumma insisted I take a secretarial course instead of aiming for university. That's probably why I married so young, a not-to-be-recommended form of escape

"Charlie did it tough, too. He wanted to be a chef, but she pushed him into engineering. He liked aeronautics well enough, although I think he'd have been happier in a more creative career."

Hamish topped up my glass. "Ah, the retrospectivoscope. A wonderful instrument. But if we knew the future, we'd never take chances." He grasped my hand. "Do you think you'd go over to Perth?"

"I know it's a cliché that twins share each other's pain but it's true. I'd like to see him

"I'm just asking because I have a consultancy that takes me to Perth pretty regularly. I could probably give you a lift. I looked at him in surprise. "A lift? To Perth?"

Hamish smiled. "In the company jet. Last year I decided to cut back on work. I was finding it hard to catch up on Jamie and Nathan. Geology's exciting profession, but by its very nature it takes you to very out-of-the-way places.

"One of my main clients who really keen to hang on to me. I'd pointed them towards some promising prospects – so they added the jet as a sweetener. This took the pain out of travelling across the continent. I couldn't face another red-eye Perth-to-Sydney flight."

He glanced at his watch. "That lamb should be almost ready. Let's go inside." He paused, then, "If you want to go to see your brother, just say the word."

Without thinking, I moved towards him, and wrapped my arms around his neck.

"Hamish, you're wonderful. How can I ever thank you?"

He smiled, then kissed me. "Well..." he said – and smile