

Scrublands by Chris Hammer

Summary

In an isolated country town brought to its knees by endless drought, a charismatic and dedicated young priest calmly opens fire on his congregation, killing five parishioners before being shot dead himself.

A year later, troubled journalist Martin Scarsden arrives in Riversend to write a feature on the anniversary of the tragedy. But the stories he hears from the locals about the priest and incidents leading up to the shooting don't fit with the accepted version of events his own newspaper reported in an award-winning investigation. Martin can't ignore his doubts, nor the urgings of some locals to unearth the real reason behind the priest's deadly rampage.

Just as Martin believes he is making headway, a shocking new development rocks the town, which becomes the biggest story in Australia. The media descends on Riversend and Martin is now the one in the spotlight. His reasons for investigating the shooting have suddenly become very personal.

Wrestling with his own demons, Martin finds himself risking everything to discover a truth that becomes darker and more complex with every twist. But there are powerful forces determined to stop him, and he has no idea how far they will go to make sure the town's secrets stay buried.

Discussion Questions

1. In the first chapter, Chris Hammer places us with Martin in Riversend. What were your initial thoughts of the town? How did Martin's initial descriptions of Riversend impact your ideas about the people who live there and the events that took place?
2. Despite being set in a fictional town, Scrublands has a strong sense of place. What elements does Chris Hammer include to achieve this?
3. Martin provides the reader with an insight into the life of a journalist. What did you learn?
4. What did you think of the arrival of more media in Riversend and their response to Martin?
5. Who was your favourite character in the book and why? (*Check out Chris Hammer's response to this question here <https://bit.ly/2LyN97P>*).
6. How do you think Martin's own demons impacted his time in Riversend?
7. What assumptions at the beginning of the novel did you think could not be true?
8. Did any of the twists and turns surprise you?
9. What did you think of the ending of the book? Were all your questions answered?