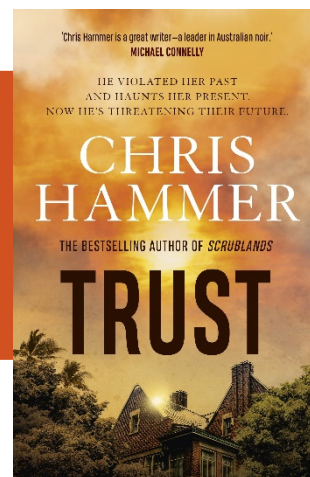




Trust

Chris Hammer



Author Background

Award-winning author Chris Hammer was a journalist for more than 30 years. He covered federal politics for *The Age* and *The Bulletin* and spent many years as a SBS *Dateline* foreign correspondent, where he reported from more than 30 countries across six continents.

His first non-fiction book - *The River: a journey through the Murray-Darling Basin*, published in 2010 – explored the impact this ailing river system had on local communities and won the ACT Book of the Year Award and was shortlisted for the Walkley Book Award. This was followed by *The Coast: A journey along Australia's eastern shores*.

But it was the people he met writing *The River* that inspired his debut fiction novel in 2018, the highly acclaimed *Scrublands*, which won the coveted UK Crime Writers' Association New Blood Dagger Award. A year later he published *Silver*, the second book starring troubled journalist Martin Scarsden. *Trust*, published in 2020, is the third instalment in this popular series.

In 2021 he will release a stand-alone book, *Treasure & Dirt*, set in the opal-mining districts of outback Australia. Chris lives in Canberra with his wife, Dr Tomoko Akami, and has two children.

Book Summary

Trust is the third instalment in Hammer's best-selling series featuring journalist Martin Scarsden and his girlfriend Mandalay (aka Mandy) Blonde. Unlike his previous two books that were praised for their rustic, rural settings, *Trust* unfolds in the gritty streets of Sydney, which are blanketed in the bushfire smoke covering much of Australia at the time this book was written.

As with his other books, Hammer doesn't dilly-dally getting started. The first chapter opens with Martin playing on the beach with his adopted son when he listens to a voicemail: a scream from his girlfriend that is abruptly cut off. He races home to find an unconscious man on his floor and Mandy apparently abducted.

What follows is a keenly crafted tale where both Martin and Mandy unearth secrets from the past that challenge their trust in human nature and each other. Mandy discovers the man she once planned to marry was not who she thought he was. Meanwhile, Martin wonders why Mandy chose to hide this period from her past and what role she may have played in the crimes connected to it.

Add a good dose of nepotism, privilege, and corruption and this becomes a riveting read.

Discussion Questions

- ❖ Authors are often advised to ‘write what you know’ – do you think the fact Chris Hammer was a journalist gives his novels an extra edge over his competitors? In what way?
- ❖ In *Scrublands* and *Silver*, Mandalay Blonde is not given her own personal dialogue but in this book we get to hear her perspective. Do you think this adds or detracts from the story?
- ❖ Chris Hammer says he chooses character names that people will remember. Do you believe the unusual monikers – Mandalay Blonde, Tarquin Molloy, D’Arcy Defoe etc – helped or hindered you in following the story?
- ❖ In previous books in this series, the setting has been small fictional rural towns. *Trust*, however, is based in the urban (though not touristy) streets of Sydney and combines real landmarks (eg Crown Street, Surry Hills) with fictional places (Mollison’s Investment Bank). Which approach do you prefer and why?
- ❖ How do you feel the media is portrayed in this book? Do you think it is realistic or has Hammer applied some ‘journalistic licence’ to how the media operates?
- ❖ What did you think of the secret dinner club? Did it add to the theme of corruption and privilege or was it gratuitous?
- ❖ Some of the violence in this novel is quite graphic, while at other times it is suggested – which has the most powerful effect for the reader?
- ❖ Hammer wove elements of the 2020 bushfires and pandemic into the narrative – do you think fictional books have a role in documenting history is this way?
- ❖ Do you think there should be a fourth book in this series? Will Martin Scarsden be as durable a character as Peter Temple’s Jack Irish or Peter Corris’ Cliff Hardy? Why or why not?

References

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