

Thursday 21 June 2018

Dear Bookseller,

I am genuinely elated I can finally share my book, *One Hundred Years of Dirt*, with you. It has been kicking around in my head in some form since I was in high school. I needed to write this book because, in a sense, it felt like what happened to my family and me happened inside a region of empty space.

I came to see the trajectory of people from poor homes and broken families, of those who encountered drug abuse, mental illness, violence and heartache, as largely invisible. Few voices make it out to command attention and tell the tale. I certainly had access to none of them while I was growing up and discovering the many subtle ways such a background can frustrate an existence.

I became increasingly aware as I grew up and moved into the world that it was not built for people like me or my mother.

That is only half the story, of course. The other half is love. Great absences of love can define a life, but the sturdiest of devotion can rescue one, too. There are many instances in my life where such delicate and persistent displays of love have filled the void of others. These have come from all quarters—friends, mentors and even strangers—but none more so than my own mum, who embodies the definition of sacrifice.

This book happened, in a funny kind of way, because the former Labor leader Mark Latham called me an elitist on social media. I bristled, perhaps too much, and penned a column for the ‘Review’ section of *The Weekend Australian* in May 2017. The book grew from that column.

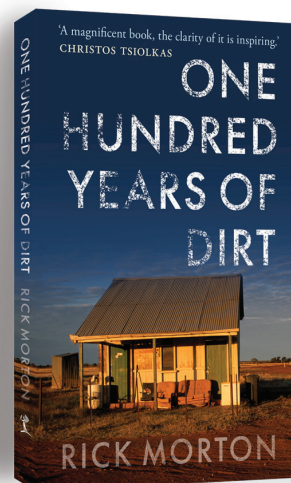
I wrote *One Hundred Years of Dirt* to call out the false prophets of the ‘everyman’ who pretend to be friends of the battlers while abusing them for their own ideological ends.

Maybe this book isn’t the antidote to that. It contains, however, a real story about hard people in a violent place, the degradations of financial and cultural poverty and the redeeming power of love. Unlike the commentators who wish to use the working poor to their own advantage, I don’t just know these people: I grew up with them.

Thank you for having, and reading, my book.



Rick Morton



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