



## Red Queen

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## **Red Queen** Honey Brown , H.M. Brown

Shannon and Rohan Scott have retreated to their family's cabin in the Australian bush to escape a virus-ravaged world. After months of isolation, Shannon imagines there's nothing he doesn't know about his older brother, or himself – until a stranger slips under their late-night watch and past their loaded guns.

Reluctantly the brothers take the young woman into their fold, and the dynamic within the cabin shifts. Possessiveness takes hold, loyalties are split, and trust is shattered. Before long, all three find themselves locked into a very different battle for survival.

Daring, stylish and sexy, Red Queen is a psychological thriller that will leave you breathless.

'...a taut psychological thriller ... the most filmic of stories.' The Sun-Herald

'HM Brown's Red Queen is a cracker of a thriller involving a peculiar menage a trois camped out in the bush. There's a good chance you may miss your train or bus stop, or show up to work with Vuitton-like bags beneath your eyes from a sleepless night trying to race to the last page.' Vogue

## **Red Queen Details**

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## From Reader Review Red Queen for online ebook

### **Kathryn says**

This wasn't what I expected. I liked the premise of the book (a virus threatens all of humanity and the only way for brothers, Rohan and Shannon, to survive is to withdraw from society and live self-sufficiently somewhere in rural Victoria which works well until a woman finds them and wants to throw in her lot with them), however there were some graphic descriptions of sex scenes that were a little disturbing. I generally think less is more when it comes to sex scenes, with a wink often being as good as a nod and I think this would have been a stronger story with more allusion and less description, because the twists and turns of the plot were clever and the storyline was intriguing.

I was also quite interested in the Red Queen virus, but there wasn't much detail about that at all. I wish Honey Brown had gone into more detail about how it came about and how it got the name Red Queen.

I will consider reading another Honey Brown to see whether another of her book is less graphic in her sexual descriptions.

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### **Kira says**

4.5\* Shannon and his brother Rohan have survived a killer virus and live hidden away in a remote region of the Australian country side. Their routine and their lives are thrown into chaos and confusion with the arrival of a woman, Denny. At first suspicious and wary of her, she soon changes everything for them. The suspense in the story builds and the reader finds themselves drawn deeper into the story. Uncertainty about Denny (who she is, is she trustworthy, why are they acting the way they do) builds and colours everything.

This was a gripping read. I really felt for Shannon and it was great that my own thought's about Denny were accurate but at the same time I questioned whether or not I was heading in the right direction with them. Great to read a dystopia that isn't all about war or a fight for survival in the cities as many of the books in this genre tend to be.

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### **Karen says**

Apocalyptic scenarios are not my favourite thing. To be frank, a pandemic world-wide threat from a mutant viruses wasn't making me feel a desperate urge to read RED QUEEN. I've been shuffling other books over it in the priority queue for quite a while. But eventually, you've just got to stop sooking about these things and get on with reading.

There was some confusion in my mind about exactly what "category" this novel falls into. It won an Aurealis award for Best Horror Novel, but I'd heard comments that indicated that the book, despite the apocalyptic setting, was more of a thriller. To my uneducated mind, there didn't seem a lot of horror about RED QUEEN, but it certainly fits the thriller criteria. Set in the Australian bush, brothers Shannon and Rohan are hiding out from the effects of the virus, holed up in the ultimate survivalist paradise, set up originally by their parents, both of whom have died from the very virus the brothers are trying to avoid. They stay constantly on guard,

despite which, their defences are breached by a smart young woman who initially steals food from the cabin during the night, eventually revealing herself and asking for their help and shelter.

Once Denny arrives on the scene it's hard to avoid a sense of inevitability about the relationships. Shannon is the more sensitive, gentle brother - and he takes on the "good cop" role very quickly. Rohan is more mistrusting, taking the "bad cop" role with aplomb, right down to being the brother that Denny turns to for sexual gratification. What saves that entire scenario is the clever and subtle way that the conflict between the brothers is handled. The sexual rivalry fits into a general feeling of distrust, tension and rivalry as rules of the house are stretched, and the ever present threat from the outside world hangs heavily over all three characters. There is also the increasing pressure of if, and how, they can remain self-sufficient with every day that passes.

There is something very atmospheric about RED QUEEN, and the writing is clever. Whilst it's very descriptive, and extremely evocative it's also elegant, pared down, and without padding. Still, you can feel the tension in the air, see the glowering looks and the sideways glances. The bush and environs of the cabin come to life, even the weather feels real and very immediate. RED QUEEN is assured storytelling, clever and extremely surprising. Especially as it kept this reader involved despite some predictable plot lines, overt characterisations and the sort of happy-ever-after ending that always leaves me feeling decidedly queasy.

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### **Elaine says**

This was my first experience of Honey Brown's work on the recommendation of GR's friend Mish but will definitely not be my last and after meeting her today at the Melbourne Writer's Festival I have become a fan!!! It took me a while to warm to the story but once I did there was no turning back and the story really did take off. There were twists and turns I was not expecting and it was a very clever plot. Again another book that crosses over a few genres.

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### **Mish says**

Thought this book was amazing. I was hooked from the very first chapter. Looking forward to reading Honey Browns latest book "The Good Daughter"

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### **Jenny says**

A virus has wiped out most of humanity (how original). Two brothers battle to survive in the Victorian bush and are doing well until one day a woman turns up. Her arrival changes everything: one brother is pitted against the other for her affections.

This is well-written but I hated all the characters with a passion. I forced myself to finish, hoping - expecting - one of them to die. I was disappointed.

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## **Sally906 says**

RED QUEEN was Honey Brown's debut novel and walked off with the 2009 Aurealis award for best horror novel. The Aurealis Awards were established in 1995 by Chimaera Publications, the publishers of Aurealis magazine, to recognise the achievements of Australian science fiction, fantasy and horror writers. Now I have to confess that I have always associated the genre of horror as books that contained horrific people-killing monsters of various types; but found out horror is actually defined as intended to scare, unsettle, or horrify the audience. RED QUEEN certainly did all three for me!

A deadly virus called 'The Red Queen' has killed millions of people around the world and survivors are holed up in various isolated spots shunning contact with other people. Rohan and Shannon are two brothers who have retreated into rural Victoria to a cabin that has been set up by their father in anticipation of a nuclear war. The two brothers are totally different characters, Shannon is the dreamer and Rohan the tough hunting, shooting, fishing bloke. Rohan is hard line and runs their little shack with non-negotiable rules, threats and guns; Shannon is often quite scared of his older brother. You can imagine their horror when a young woman manages to gain access to their home and remain undetected until the evening she just appears in the lounge room. The arrival of Denny changes everything between the two brothers and the reader just can't figure out what is actually going on, what Denny is up to. Whatever it is she seems to be playing a very dangerous game. Is she a good guy or the enemy, Shannon doesn't know and can't figure it out, Rohan just uses and abuses her, and gives no indication of his thoughts. The tension builds as information is released by Honey Brown drip by drip – and it is the not knowing that builds the tension. There are some disturbing, but not surprising sex scenes, as well as some horrific violence and cruelty. But none of it is explicit and in your face, just a few words and the idea of what is happening is in your head without assaulting your mind. Without even realising you are on the edge of your seat Honey Brown manages to keep up the suspense until almost the very end when everything finally comes out in the open and truths are revealed.

Honey Brown's writing is brilliant – there is not so much focus on the Red Queen virus other than it is out there and is the reason for isolation and the danger that the introduction of an unknown person represents. Her descriptions of the Australian bush that surrounds the cabin are so clear that you can see, hear and sadly sometimes smell the action. RED QUEEN is my first Honey brown book – and it will not be my last.

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## **Sharon says**

Brothers Rohan and Shannon Scott have been hiding out for months in a family cabin ever since a virus hit Australia. The cabin was built by the the brothers father and was to be used in an emergency. Sadly Rohan and Shannon mother and father died due to the virus. The virus spread quickly killing many and for those who were lucky enough to escape it they were left trying to find somewhere safe to hide. Rohan and Shannon had to keep their wits about them every day for fear that someone would come close. A risk they couldn't take in case they were infected. With a shotgun right beside them Rohan and Shannon take turns day and night looking out for intruders.

But the day a woman appears at their cabin it seems their system that had been keeping them safe for months had failed. They quickly learn the woman who's name is, Denny Cassidy had been watching the brothers for awhile. Both Rohan and Shannon are hesitant in allowing, Denny to join them, but once they realise that she's alone and starving they decide to let their guard down. But could allowing, Denny into their safe world

be a decision both Rohan and Shannon live to regret?

A fantastic psychological thriller that had me turning the pages rather quickly. Highly recommended.

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## **ALPHAreader says**

Shannon Scott is sick of looking at his brother's face. He and Rohan have been living in the remote Australian bush since the plague broke, and Shannon is growing more and more irritated with Rohan's quirks and dominance – from his nicknaming him 'pup' to the way he resignedly wins at poker.

But since their parents died of the Red Queen Virus months ago, Rohan is all Shannon has. And, thanks in large part to their paranoid father, they have a well-stocked, veritable fortress to live in and wait out the mayhem of the outside world as country's scramble for a cure or, in the meantime, attempt to regain control of the populace.

So Rohan and Shannon wait. They tend to the sheep and chooks, fish in the nearby river and take turns standing guard with loaded rifles; watching the quiet bush that surrounds them for any signs of intruders.

And then Denny Cassidy comes along.

She leaves a note, explaining that she has been watching them for weeks from her perch atop the hill. She says she is not infected. She says she wants to stay with them. She has already been in their house, taken some of their food without them knowing . . . she is not dangerous, she says.

Rohan is adamant that this is a bad idea. The Red Queen Virus can take up to two weeks to show symptoms, and he doesn't trust Denny's sudden appearance or her humble motives. But Shannon wants her to stay – he is intrigued by a new face, a young woman no less, and thinks that if they turn her away, they will have lost all vestiges of their humanity.

So Denny stays with them.

At first she is a real asset to their home life; helping with chores and willing to comply with Rohan's stringent rules. But when her hand starts lingering on Shannon's knee, when she starts offering him back rubs and sings along with his guitar-playing . . . the dynamic in the house shifts. Denny chooses Rohan's bed, but continues to coax Shannon, until everything becomes messier and more complex than either of the brothers could have ever expected; especially when they both fall in love with her.

But is Denny playing a game? Is her love a survival technique, or genuine feelings for two men?

'Red Queen' was the 2009 Aurealis Award-winning debut by H.M. Brown (Honey Brown).

My first Honey Brown book was 'The Good Daughter'; a tightly-woven, small-town mystery that had me in the palm of her hand from page one. My second Brown reading, 'After the Darkness' was just as enjoyable – a ticking psychological thriller that had me on the edge of my seat. So I always knew that I would eventually go back and read Brown's critically-acclaimed debut novel – I'm only sore at the fact it took me this long to get around to it because, as I suspected, 'Red Queen' was wonderful.

The dystopian genre has exploded in recent years. Everything has pretty much been covered – from a world ravaged by global warming, to structured society's ruled by government theory. I have read dystopian wastelands, and worlds plagued by disease that turns people into zombies. I've pretty much read all that dystopia has to offer, but I've never read anything quite like Honey Brown's 'Red Queen'.

The book is told from Shannon's first-person narrative. At one point he offers a theory of the Red Queen Virus origin. He says that it came from an "arms race principle" – that when humans stopped treating the symptoms of diseases, and started fighting the causes of them, they effectively issued war against biology. The theory being that humanity had gotten so good at curing itself, lowering death-rates and overpopulating the world with surgeries, vaccines, medicines etc, that disease was forced to evolve – into the Red Queen Virus (of which, it is rumoured, there is now ten strands – RQV1 through to RQV10 – as the virus keeps adapting). The virus is, essentially, righting the wrongs of science by culling the population. The virus starts as a common cold, but progresses to fluid in the lungs and a slow, bloody death. Transmission is easy, and can be found in the touch of one's hand;

*What was without question was the sovereignty of touch. We did not touch. It had become automatic the minute the virus landed on Australian soil. It wasn't a spoken rule; arms could brush, shoulders could bump, and incidental skin contact was repellent but forgiven, but conscientious touch – fingertips, a warm hand, a face too close – it just went without saying. Personal space had shrivelled to a hard nut so far inside each body even your own hand on your skin could seem unwanted. So the sight of Denny's hand, the long curve of her thumb, the dirty curl of her fingers, held out and inviting the chance of Rohan's touch, became the centre of the room, and everything converged in on it.*

Throughout the book all three characters drop hints and speculations about how the outside world is coping and trying to cure the RQV. Denny, Shannon and Rohan can only muse on the word-of-mouth they heard before going into hiding – but the consensus is that China has a cure (because of their low rate of infection) but they don't intend to hand it over. Metropolitan areas are deserted, and people have scattered all over. Denny claims that the army are providing rations to the groups who have banded together – but lone travellers or 'unknowns', are set upon by those groups and shunned by the army. As long as the Red Queen Virus keeps adapting and killing, humanity will continue to crumble. Denny says that Rohan and Shannon have done well to stay hidden in the outback, and she is glad to be banded with them.

What I love about Brown's dystopia is that while chaos reigns in the outside world, 'Red Queen' is focused entirely on three characters and their evolving dynamic in a small, secluded cabin in the bush. So often in dystopian's these days, our protagonists just so happen to be in the thick of the action – apart of the uprising rebellion against the totalitarian regime, or a member of the group tasked with searching for 'the cure'. Sometimes in those books, the world-building is so grand, the plot so epic and in the thick of it, that human connections get lost amidst the dystopian theatrics and themes. Not so in 'Red Queen'. Brown never lets us lose sight of why the brothers and Denny are out in the middle of the bush – a virus is raging and the world as they once knew it is forever changed. But the really, truly fascinating crux of the book is in Brown's explorations of human interaction.

Rohan is older than Shannon – 38 to his 23. This age discrepancy has informed their entire relationship in the cabin, with Rohan the self-appointed alpha (who calls Shannon 'pup', as a reminder). Their past sibling interaction also informs how they are with each other now – their parents had Rohan when they were in their teens, so the boy's father treated Rohan more like a friend than a son and so taught him different life skills than Shannon (who consequently took after their mother). Shannon and Rohan also never lived together growing up – they saw one another for family dinners and outings, but their time together in the wake of the virus outbreak is their first prolonged period of time together.

Enter Denny. She is 30 years old and more than willing to adhere to Rohan's rules in his presence, but quick to side with Shannon in private. Denny's presence is the match-strike to the tense kindling relationship between the brothers. She starts flirting with Shannon, but goes to Rohan's bed. When she shows an open attraction to both brothers, old rules of civility and boundaries are blurred and skewed.

Reading the knife-edge relationship between the brothers is a fascinating dip into the human psyche unto itself. Throw a beautiful woman into the mix, and 'Red Queen' becomes a terse psychological thriller . . . especially when Honey Brown starts readers questioning Denny's intentions. Does she have genuine affection for both brothers? Or is she playing them off one another – and if so, to what end? This is where 'Red Queen' becomes a stand-out from all other dystopian's. I feel like in other 'disaster' books, the triggering plague/earthquake/zombie-horde sometimes overshadows the characters. Not so in 'Red Queen'. The virus provided the necessity for the setting, and adds a certain permeating paranoia; but ultimately 'Red Queen' is about human foibles and trickery. Brown has readers questioning how far human-beings will go to save themselves; what boundaries they'll cross, and who they will betray.

Something I find fascinating in all of Brown's books is her portrayal of women, in particular their interactions with men. She touches a lot on violence against women, particularly rape, without writing explicit scenes. Sometimes there's more power in Brown putting the idea out there than actually reading a gut-churning rape scene. She did it in 'The Good Daughter', when the main character was almost gang-raped but escaped with the help of a stranger – and I honestly felt sicker in the build-up and possibility of that violence, more so than with some books in which the writer lays it all on the page. Brown does it again in 'Red Queen' – poking and prodding the idea of men and their dominance over women, without writing graphic scenes. As a woman, it was one of the first things I thought of when I read Denny approaching Shannon and Rohan – she does so early on in the book, when as a reader I was still trying to establish how they'd treat her – and, I admit, my mind went to rape. I think it's a very unfortunate, but natural reaction that female readers will have in the book – that inherent "what would I do in her shoes?" and the thought of being raped by these two men is an obvious one to flit across your mind. Brown acknowledges that – she expands on it and questions it in such a way that will have you thinking on societal norms and human interactions. And that's partly why I love reading Honey Brown's portrayals of women – she writes our fears and thoughts without horrifying us with unnecessary graphic detail. And, as I said, Honey Brown writes better brutal build-up than some authors do violent scenes.

I was utterly and completely enthralled by 'Red Queen'. I was guessing at Denny's intentions right up until the very last page – and the ending was one of the trickiest and most satisfying I have ever had the pleasure of reading. I now, officially, love all of Honey Brown's books – but, by a small margin, I would perhaps recommend 'Red Queen' above all others. A very different look at dystopia – this is a tense, human psychological drama that doesn't lose sight of the triggering disaster, but rather writes a brilliant guessing game around its fallout. Incredible.

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## Heidi says

Apocalyptic novels are normally not my thing, but I love Honey Brown's writing and still needed to read a dystopian novel for my 2013 Eclectic Reader Challenge, so I thought I would give Red Queen a go.

After narrowly surviving falling victim to the deadly Red Queen virus which claimed the lives of their parents, Rohan and Shannon Scott are living in isolation in a remote cabin in the Australian bush. Having



been in hiding for months they have had no news from the outside world, which is in chaos since the very contagious virus has claimed the lives of millions all around the globe. Thanks to their father's foresight they have plenty of food to last them for several years, and their lives have settled into a steady – if lonely – routine.

One day a lone woman appears on their doorstep. Denny Cassidy claims that she also is the sole survivor of her family and had been marooned in an abandoned farmhouse not far from the cabin. After running out of food she accidentally stumbled across Rohan's tracks, and is now asking the brothers for shelter. Despite serious misgivings, Rohan and Shannon accept Denny into their fold, which drastically changes the dynamics of the household and creates tension between the brothers. But what are Denny's real motives? Is she playing one brother off against the other?

Red Queen won the 2009 Aurealis Award, and it is not hard to see why. Even in her debut novel, Honey Brown already shows the hallmarks of her writing – a taut compelling narrative exposing the most innate fears of the human soul. Brown is a master at setting the scene and creating an atmosphere of suspense which haunts the reader long after finishing the story, and her descriptions of the Australian bush allow the scenes to play out clearly in one's mind. By isolating the characters from the outside world (as Brown has masterfully done in her latest novel Dark Horse), a small universe is created in which the human soul is stripped to its very core, and the most intimate emotions come to the fore.

Red Queen is a study of human nature operating under pressure, and of interpersonal relationships and family dynamics. It was fascinating to see how the arrival of a woman in their cabin would fundamentally change the hierarchy the two brothers had established – with Rohan, the older, firmly in charge, and Shannon doing his bidding. As sexual tension is introduced into the mix, the rules suddenly change and Shannon is no longer content to blindly obey his brother. It is inevitable that there would be conflict, and even without knowing her true motives it was easy to see how Denny uses this to her own advantage. From here the story plays out in almost biblical old-world fashion, with the female temptress creating conflict between the brothers, who each now have reason to try and establish their dominance over each other and the newcomer. Interesting to me were the characters' androgenous names – each name could be male or female ... perhaps to highlight the gender dominance issues in the novel?

Despite being drawn in by Brown's writing, I admit I did not enjoy the novel as much as I thought I would. Not really warming to any of the characters and missing an emotional connection left me slightly irritated by their behaviour, and as the inevitable conflict plays out and Denny's past comes into the mix, I was relieved when the conclusion was reached.

My rating reflects personal reading pleasure only. Fans of the dystopian genre and apocalyptic setting should definitely give this book a go – its tension is palpable, its setting masterfully drawn, and the suspense build until the very end. Brown does the genre justice and has firmly established herself as one of Australia's best thriller writers. I have now read every one of Brown's novels, and will am looking forward to reading a lot more from this author in the future.

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## **Emkoshka says**

Two's company, three's a crowd. Especially when those three are two brothers and a beautiful woman, holed

up in a bush cabin away from a virus-infected world. I remember seeing this book when I was at Sydney Airport seven years ago waiting for an international flight. The premise sounded really interesting and if I'd bought it then it would've been a good plane read, although the sex scenes would've been awkward! Coming to it now, I perhaps appreciate it more. I've read snippets about the author throughout the years - that her stepfather found the manuscript for this debut novel in a drawer and sent it to a publisher, that she's a paraplegic - and she seems to have developed as a local thriller writer, although her readership seems low. Based on just this book, her first, Honey Brown is a strong and confident writer although Penguin really fudged the editing process: there's a glaring typo on the first page of the book and twice 'clamour' is used in a patently wrong way: 'He clamoured over the chair'; 'He clamoured out of the water'. Seriously?! What editor mistakes 'clamour' and 'clamber'? Poor form. Editing gripes aside, this was a really enjoyable and riveting read which I blazed through in 2.5 nights; I'll definitely be hunting down more of Brown's books. But given that *Red Queen* won an Aurealis award in 2009, I'm disappointed that it languishes in obscurity now. Anyone looking for a dystopian ménage à trois psychological thriller set in the Australian bush, look no further.

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### **Brenda says**

When the highly contagious virus hit the shores of Australia, working its way through the country with a speed that stunned, the people who didn't die immediately sought refuge wherever they could. They were called the survivors; Rohan and Shannon were two such people. The brothers had lost their parents to the disease, and were fortunate to have a cabin deep in the woods which their father had built for such an emergency.

Day and night they kept watch – they couldn't trust a soul, knew that if anyone came close they could possibly be infected – and that would mean the end. They were vigilant, their shotgun and rifle always close at hand. While Rohan slept Shannon kept watch, quietly strumming his guitar in the stillness of the night. Shannon slept late while Rohan was keeping watch. They had it under control, had been doing it that way for months.

So when suddenly their privacy and solitude was violated it created tension between the brothers; whose fault was it, who wasn't keeping watch properly? After they discovered the young woman had been watching them for some time, was starving and alone, they reluctantly allowed her to join them. But things changed – trust wasn't something to be shared under the circumstances. The brothers became tense and angry with each other – but they were drawn to Denny in a way that surprised them both. With the survival of the three living in the cabin paramount, what would happen next? Rohan's priority was to keep Shannon alive – wasn't it?

What a brilliant psychological thriller! I could not put this down! I have read a couple of Aussie author Honey Brown's novels now, and realizing this one is her debut meant I needed to read it. And I am so glad I did! Highly recommended.

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### **MaryG2E says**

There are several excellent reviews on the Goodreads page, which describe in detail the plot lines of this remarkable story. No point in me rehashing them. Read them, they are all good.

This is a tense psychological thriller, very cleverly crafted by a talented writer.

My reactions to this book were quite visceral - I felt very anxious at several points throughout the book. This is a sign of a darned good bit of writing. I was totally sucked into that claustrophobic setting of the cabin in the remote bush (being a Victorian, I have camped in similar areas and know that feeling of complete isolation.) I was yelling out loud in my lounge room at the pages, "No, Shannon, don't do that...Denny, you bitch...!!!" etc, etc.

Honey Brown has created a narrow, stifling environment in which to play out a drama between three flawed characters. The deadly, virulent Red Queen virus, which has caused the protagonists to retreat to the remote setting, is a fundamental source of fear and leads to an explainable paranoia on the part of the men in hiding. The intruder, a woman, is a source of sexual tension and a power struggle. In the end, I believe the woman, Denny, wins the psychological battle, as she gains safety for herself and her family. She also holds out the prospect of hope and new life, in a world which has been devastated by death. Brilliant writing, despite a couple of unresolved story lines. A true 5★ read for me.

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### **Marianne says**

“We did not touch. It had become automatic the minute the virus had landed on Australian soil. It wasn't a spoken rule; arms could brush, shoulders could bump, and accidental skin contact was repellent but forgiven, but conscious touch – fingertips, a warm hand, a face too close – it just went without saying. Personal space had shrivelled to a hard nut so far inside each body even your own hand on your skin could seem unwanted”

Red Queen is the first novel by Australian author, Honey Brown. Shannon Scott and his older brother Rohan are living in an isolated cabin in the bush. As they wait out the effects of the Red Queen virus that has decimated the population and destroyed the social order, they guard what they have. Shannon tries to follow Rohan's often arbitrary (and seemingly paranoid) rules with mixed success.

He is so starved of distraction, of company, that, when a woman manages to evade their guard, he is, in his naiveté, more excited than worried. Rohan grudgingly allows Denny Cassidy to stay. She manages to get under his guard, but he is still wary, despite the intimacy she provides. Is Denny a genuine solitary survivor, or does she have her own agenda?

Brown uses young Shannon as her narrator, and, giving the reader events from his (perhaps somewhat gullible) perspective, creates an ominous “this can't end well” feeling. Brown conveys the Australian bush with consummate ease, as well as effectively rendering the tension between characters: “We were silent. The night was like a held breath; I thought how it might never exhale”. Post-apocalyptic novels are common, but Brown's has a distinct Aussie flavour, builds up to a heart-thumping climax, and has a twist or two to keep things interesting. A brilliant debut novel!

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### **Jack Heath says**

Every time you think you've got Red Queen figured out, the author proves you wrong in the following chapter. There are essentially only three characters, and at various points you will love, hate and be

suspicious - even frightened - of each of them. The post-apocalyptic bushland setting also shines, as beautiful as it is convincing.

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