

GOOD COUNTRY

Written by

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FADE IN:

SUPER:

TATIARA: 'GOOD COUNTRY' OF THE POTARUWUTJ NATION - MARCH 2019

EXT/INT. CAR TRAVELLING - RURAL BACK ROAD - DAY

OLD TOM SPENCER (80) drives a dusty, late model European car.

Sheep graze in the broad open paddocks. Old Tom looks scornfully to a paddock some distance beyond the sheep. A drilling rig of sorts.

A news broadcast emanates from the car's audio.

NEWS ANNOUNCER (V.O.)

In Melbourne, seventy-eight year old Catholic Cardinal, George Pell, who was found guilty by jury in December 2018 of abusing two choirboys while he was archbishop of Melbourne in the 1990s, was today sentenced to serve a term of six years in prison. He will be eligible for parole --

Old Tom turns the radio off, drives a few more metres, clutches his chest, awkwardly tries to pull to a halt.

In vain. The car veers into a fragile Mallee tree.

The dust clears - no major damage, not enough to action the air bag.

He fades into semi-consciousness.

EXT. MELBOURNE STREET - DAY

A tram trundles past a modern, medium rise office block.

INT. BOARDROOM - DAY

KATHERINE SPENCER (40), black executive suit, places her laptop on the glass tabletop.

She is flanked by three other FEMALE EXECS along with two MALES, similar age, similar devices ... and confidence.

One of the Females punches some commands on her device ...

YOUNG FEMALE EXECUTIVE #1
Time to bring wool back into vogue.

A huge screen on a wall, images of haute-couture designs.

EXT. RURAL BACK ROAD - DAY

A silver-grey 4-WD tradies ute, loaded with machinery parts, pulls up alongside Old Tom's car up against the mallee tree.

On the door of the ute is a sign: "KEROGEN DEVELOPMENTS"

The DRIVER, work clothes, hi-vis vest, rushes to Old Tom's car.

INT. HOMESTEAD KITCHEN - DAY

Part of an addition to the original nineteenth century building, last modernized in the 1980s.

AUDREY (60s), the domestic help, holds a battered address book, picks up the wall-mounted phone, taps a number.

INT. BOARDROOM - DAY - SAME

Katherine et al close their laptops.

YOUNG FEMALE EXECUTIVE #1
Okay, remember our ethos, there's
always a market for the best.

They stand in unison.

YOUNG FEMALE EXECUTIVE #1
We're moving up, guys.

KATHERINE
And remember. No ceilings, glass or
otherwise.

They depart the Boardroom. Katherine's mobile phone rings.

She curtly farewells the others, checks the NO CALLER ID, curious. Reluctant at first, she never-the-less answers.

KATHERINE
Audrey? I'm not sure I ... Yes of
course, Audrey. Yes, long time ...

INT. MELBOURNE CITY APARTMENT - LOUNGE - NIGHT

High-rise Melbourne city apartment.

Katherine, silky kimono robe, closes her valise, places it on the floor alongside a small ultra-light travel case. She moves into ...

BEDROOM

... grabs a small remote unit from a sideboard, dims the lights, plays relaxing MUSIC.

She goes to the full-length windows and stares out at the high-rise city lights.

EXT. ESSENDON AIRPORT TARMAC - DAY

A Cessna 310R light commuter aircraft ascends into the early morning sky.

INT. LIGHT AIRCRAFT - DAY

Katherine, jeans and loose shirt, dozes in her seat. The plane banks. She wakes, takes a casual look out the window.

EXT. PADDOCK - DAY

The aircraft flies over geometric fields of golden leafed vineyards, circles over a mob of grazing sheep.

EXT. COUNTRY AIRSTRIP - DAY

The light aircraft on a simple country airstrip, parked on the tarmac by a basic terminal.

A simple sign: "WELCOME TO PADTHAWAY"

Katherine alights. A scruffy bloke, ANDY (20) approaches.

ANDY
Miss Spencer?

KATHERINE
Miss? Quaint.

He's bemused.

KATHERINE

Never mind.

ANDY

Andy. Local Taxi. Been sent by Miss
Audrey.

Andy stows the single case and valise in the boot of an older
model sedan that passes as a taxi.

Katherine presents an open palm, soliciting the keys. He's
reluctant. She's assertive. He acquiesces.

ANDY

It's a bit of a drive, Miss. D'you
know the --?

She plucks the keys from his hand.

EXT. RURAL BACK ROAD - ENTRANCE GATEWAY - DAY

Katherine, with Andy passenger, drives the taxi in through an
old, once-grandiose gateway.

On one deteriorating pillar of the gateway, a tarnished brass
plaque:

"TATIARA PARK - EST. 1886"

They continue along the dirty gravel driveway of the avenue
of Silver Birch trees, leaves golden yellow, toward the two-
story sandstone homestead, stately despite years of neglect.

INT. KATHERINE'S BEDROOM - DAY

Neat and tidy, the sash window open, airing.

Katherine deposits her suitcase on the floor just inside the
door, takes her valise and computer satchel from Audrey,
slings them on the old brass and iron double bed.

The mattress trampolines, the bed creaks.

Katherine picks up a floppy toy cloth lamb from the pillow.

KATHERINE

Good old Lammikins.

AUDREY

You used to stuff your jarmies in
them, remember?

KATHERINE
Hmmm, pyjamas.

AUDREY
This all the luggage?

KATHERINE
Travelled light. In and out.

Audrey stands at the doorway, ill-at-ease.

AUDREY
The nurse is with him at the moment, but he's expecting a visitor shortly. Don't know if you want to join them for a light brunch?

KATHERINE
I'm sure I'll be up to it.

Audrey bites her lip, slips away.

Katherine lifts a framed school photo from a chest of drawers:

Innocent looking teenage girl in her immaculate uniform.

Another photo of her on a pony with other teenage girls.

She replaces the photo, opens the top drawer, withdraws an old school diary, flips through the first few pages, reads.

KATHERINE
Roses are red, Wattle is yella,
Katherine is sure to find a nice
fella. Anonymous.

She tosses it back in the drawer, eyes the posters of her teen idols on the wall; Bowie, Grohl, Bon Jovi.

EXT. HOMESTEAD - VERANDAH - DAY

An upmarket silver-grey 4-WD parked in front.

On the door, mostly obscured by built-up dust, signage:
"KEROGEN DEVELOPMENTS"

At a cane wicker table setting, Audrey serves tea to a frail Old Tom, Katherine, and a portly man RAYMOND HARTMANN (mid-60s) in ill-fitting fashionable rural attire.

Katherine looks toward

A TRACK

A black 4-WD dual cab ute rumbles from a track close to the gateway and out on to the road.

VERANDAH

KATHERINE
And that would be?

Audrey looks toward the 4-WD, turns quickly and departs.

OLD TOM
Hamilton. New manager.

Hartmann looks with disdain toward the gateway.

KATHERINE
New manager? The old one kick the bucket?

OLD TOM
Let him go years ago.

KATHERINE
Why? Couldn't hack the job, or the bastard of a boss?

OLD TOM
Thought by now you would have learnt a bit of respect, young lady. If your mother was alive today, she'd be --

KATHERINE
Miserable and old for her years.

Hartmann sits a little uneasy with all this.

OLD TOM
Still the insolent one, aren't you, girlie.

Katherine abruptly stands.

KATHERINE
Girlie.
(addresses Hartmann)
Mister Hartmann.

She storms off to one side of the homestead.

Hartmann shifts in his chair.

HARTMANN
Bit harsh old man.

OLD TOM
Harsh my arse.

Hartmann's beady eyes follow the departed Katherine.

OLD TOM
What's an ailing man to do without
his own son?

HARTMANN
You can't go on blaming --

OLD TOM
She had no right to meddle.

HARTMANN
He was pissed. Should never have
been behind the wheel.

OLD TOM
But if she hadn't --

Old Tom takes a sudden turn, stiffens in his chair.

Hartmann calls.

HARTMANN
Nurse. NURSE.

SHORT DISTANCE OFF

Katherine, up a gentle incline, turns on hearing the
commotion.

HOMESTEAD

A middle-age NURSE in a rudimentary white uniform rushes
along the verandah to Old Tom's aid.

KATHERINE

lingers momentarily ... but continues on her way, up toward a
chapel in the near distance.

EXT. SMALL FAMILY GRAVEYARD - DAY

The rear of the chapel.

Several headstones reveal the extent of the dynasty.
Katherine comes to a particular site, the headstone reads:

"RICHARD SEBASTIAN SPENCER BORN 4-1-1974 DIED 6-6-1997"

INT. HOMESTEAD - DAY

DINING ROOM

Olde world antique decor but far from dismal.

Katherine stares at a framed black and white photo (mid-90s era) of a handsome young man (mid-20s) in open top vintage sports car. To one side of the car, an attractive young woman (early 20s). On the other, in riding gear and helmet upon a pony, a teenage girl (young Katherine). In the background, an older man.

KATHERINE

So sorry, Ricky.

She moves past various paintings, portraits, mementos that depict the Spencer dynasty, lingers a moment in front of a framed photo of a ram with a caption:

"SIR JAMES - ONE OF A KIND"

At the doorway, Katherine leans against the jamb, gives the room a final once-over and moves into ...

THE HALLWAY - CONTINUOUS

... proceeds up the carved staircase to the landing and along to a door, stops, listens to the conversation within.

HARTMANN (V.O.)

*You don't owe him, or his family.
Why on earth you let him --*

The Nurse arrives, knocks gently, opens the door and politely beckons Katherine enter with her.

INT. OLD TOM'S BEDROOM - CONTINUOUS

Katherine and the Nurse enter, interrupt Hartmann with Old Tom, propped up in a massive, ancient mahogany bedstead.

The Nurse goes about her business checking on her patient.

Hartmann, uneasy, stows a folded document in his jacket, excuses himself, brushes past a glaring Katherine.

HARTMANN

I'll have the paperwork finished
back in Adelaide. Be in touch.

Old Tom sneers at the departing visitor.

Katherine goes to a bedside what-not, picks up a tarnished
silver filigree photo frame: PIC OF WOMAN IN HER THIRTIES
(circa Late-1970s)

KATHERINE

I won't ask what that was about.

OLD TOM

Good.

Katherine replaces the frame on its lace doily, intimates to
the Nurse that she will tend to her invalid father.

The Nurse complies and leaves.

OLD TOM

You come to meddle again?

KATHERINE

I know this much. I didn't fly all
the way from Melbourne just to be
insulted.

OLD TOM

Then why did you come?

KATHERINE

I was summoned.

Old Tom looks disdainfully at the door.

OLD TOM

Not by me you weren't.

KATHERINE

Point is, I'm here now.

OLD TOM

How long?

KATHERINE

Longer than I'd planned, it seems.

OLD TOM

Why's that?

KATHERINE

You're not up to running the place
any more.

OLD TOM

Says who?

KATHERINE

I'd have thought it was obvious.

Old Tom dismisses this comment with the wave of a hand.

OLD TOM

How old are you Katherine?

KATHERINE

As old as my tongue --

OLD TOM

And still no man in your life.

Katherine scoffs.

KATHERINE

Not likely. Seen what's on offer.

OLD TOM

You want to be involved in men's
affairs, first get yourself a man.

KATHERINE

I don't believe I'm hearing this.

OLD TOM

Well you'd better. Just remember,
while I'm still drawing breath, I'm
in charge of this family's affairs.
In the meantime, I've got a
competent bloke to run the place.

She goes to protest, but he grabs the upper hand.

OLD TOM

You'll get your chance when I'm
good and ready.

She turns and leaves.

KATHERINE

Bastard.

OLD TOM
(mutters after her)
I'd be careful using that word
around here.

EXT. STABLES-ENCLOSURE - DAY

A solitary, aged horse lifts its head, pricks its ears,
WHINNIES, aware of the presence of a visitor.

KATHERINE (O.S.)
Didn't have the heart to send you
to the knackery, eh, old boy? One
for the books.

Katherine approaches a post with two riding helmets on pegs;
one clean, the other dirty. She tries the cleaner one - too
large. Takes the other, blows away the dust, tries it - too
small. She grabs a halter.

The horse, of its own volition, ambles up to her. She
caresses its neck, quietly slips the halter on, gives the
beast a thorough inspection, leads it around the enclosure,
gradually building to a trot.

EXT. OPEN Paddock - DAY

Katherine rides competently through grazing sheep. Her hair
flows freely ...

They pass through a gate into a paddock and are confronted
with a newly erected, very high cyclone wire fence ...

They follow it for some distance but there is no opening to
the land beyond ...

They retrace their steps, return to the original gate.

EXT. SHEARING SHED - DAY

Katherine canters up to a large corrugated iron building on
stumpy stilts, halts, examines the structure - memories?

A hundred metres away another building, stone and corrugated
iron (the Shearers' quarters) and nearby, a third building...

EXT. MANAGER'S HOUSE - DAY

A neat, small, Federation-style stone house, faded red corrugated iron roof, part of a triangle of sorts with the other two other buildings.

Katherine approaches the house, dismounts, slaps the reins over a rose bush, massages her rump, negotiates the three steps to the verandah, knocks on the front door.

No response ...

wanders about the place, peeks through windows ...

returns to her horse, grabs the reins, about to mount ...

the black 4-WD dual cab ute approaches.

Katherine unconsciously checks her grooming, flips a wisp of hair behind her ear.

The vehicle comes to an abrupt halt. The horse shies. Katherine does well to control it.

CORY HAMILTON (early 40s), tall, tanned and in designer rural apparel, steps out of the vehicle, goes to assist Katherine restrain the horse.

CORY

Easy Charlie ... Sorry. I didn't expect visitors. Still settling in.

He offers his hand.

CORY

Cory Hamilton.

She hesitates at first, momentarily captivated.

She takes his hand and shakes firmly.

KATHERINE

Katherine. Spencer.

CORY

Ah, right. Boss's daughter.

KATHERINE

I am who I am.

Cory goes to the rear of the vehicle, opens the tailgate, gathers a number of cartons, carries them to the verandah.

KATHERINE

Just taking stock of things. The old empire's not as vast as I imagined it was growing up.

Cory returns to the vehicle and gathers a final carton, overloaded with books.

CORY

Nostalgia playing tricks?

KATHERINE

There's a new fence over that way.

Katherine points in the direction she has just come.

KATHERINE

Not a conventional one. Higher, like a security fence. Between here and the fire track.

Cory places the carton with the others on the verandah. Some of the books spill. He returns again to the vehicle.

CORY

Yeah, noticed that myself.

Katherine bends down and picks up one of the books.

KATHERINE

So, not your handiwork?

CORY

There when I arrived. I'll look into it if you like?

Katherine flips the cover of the book, but before she can delve, Cory flops a bleached skull with intact spiral horns of a long-deceased ram alongside the cartons.

He opens the front door, invites Katherine in.

CORY

It's never locked.

She politely declines.

CORY

So, how's your father?

KATHERINE

Lost his grip on things. Like, how come you got the gig?

CORY
I had a good reference.

KATHERINE
I'm sure you did.

He bids her indulgence, picks up the carton again.

CORY
Obviously there's a dilemma. How do you propose we deal with it?

KATHERINE
I'm sure it will resolve itself.

She places the book on top of the carton.

KATHERINE
Don't worry. Whatever arrangements he's made for you are secure. At least while he's alive.

She goes to Charlie, grabs the reins.

KATHERINE
As for Charlie, I'll tend to him while I'm back here.

He nods.

KATHERINE
Meanwhile, let's see how else nostalgia might be messing with me.
(gestures to book)
Enjoy the read.

She mounts and rides off.

Cory stands at the doorway, watches the sunlight flit through the strands of her flowing stark auburn hair, cogitates.

INT. OLD TOM'S BEDROOM - DUSK

A priest FATHER BRIAN JAMESON (mid 60s), a youthful, vigorous stature, administers comfort to the semi-comatose Old Tom.

Old Tom wakes and feebly reaches out for the priest.

OLD TOM
Katherine.

FR JAMESON
She's apparently out. Phone not --

With difficulty, Old Tom shakes his head.

OLD TOM
I want you to protect her.

FR JAMESON
She's a grown woman.

OLD TOM
You know what I mean.

The Priest gently massages the older man's hand.

FR JAMESON
I'm a priest. I've taken vows.

The old man places his other hand atop that of the priest.

Father Jameson's face betrays an inner turmoil.

INT. STABLES - DUSK

Katherine leads her charge to a stall with a faded "Charlie" sign.

She competently removes the saddlery and settles the animal for the night.

EXT. HOMESTEAD - DUSK

Katherine massages her rump, walks gingerly to the front of the house, falters.

A number of cars parked outside.

Among them, the up-market silver-grey 4-WD with the dusty signage on the door: "KEROGEN DEVELOPMENTS"

INT. HOMESTEAD - UPSTAIRS LANDING - CONTINUOUS

Katherine approaches the door to Old Tom's Bedroom. A fawning Hartmann grabs her arms, steadies her.

HARTMANN
They managed to get me on my
mobile, halfway back to town.

A DOCTOR exits, gives her a solemn look.

With a scathing look, she breaks from Hartmann and enters

OLD TOM'S BEDROOM

With Audrey in attendance, Father Jameson at the bedside anoints the head of Old Tom. He stands and nods to the Nurse.

A final check for signs of life. The Nurse draws the covers up over the lifeless body.

Audrey's piteous look toward Father Jameson does not go unnoticed by a passive Katherine.

THE KITCHEN

The makings of the evening meal, left incomplete on the bench, pots abandoned, the Rayburn stove snuffed out.

EXT. SMALL FAMILY GRAVEYARD - DAY

Hartmann, dressed in black, and other MOURNERS, solemn around a newly-prepared grave. An elaborate casket rests on the lowering frame.

Katherine, simple black and white day dress, looks away, her attention elsewhere ...

Cory stands aloof from the rest of the crowd.

Behind him, further up the rise, a dark-skinned WOMAN (60s) floats like a spectre among a copse of trees.

INT. HARTMANN'S OFFICE - DAY

At his stately mahogany desk in his plush city office, Hartmann, in a cautious, almost reluctant tone, reads a document to Katherine, seated opposite, coffee cup in hand.

HARTMAN

I thus make this bequest to my sole surviving daughter on the express understanding of the following condition, viz, that...

a) that Mister Cory Hamilton shall be retained as manager for as long as he so desires or...

a.1)...until his death, or ...

He loosens his tie, eases the pressure on his ruddy face.

HARTMANN

a.2)...until such time as my daughter shall take a man in marriage, which ever event is the sooner, in which case --

She rapidly removes the coffee cup from her lips, tries desperately to contain her mirth.

KATHERINE

That's hardly kosher, surely?

Hartmann refers to the Will.

HARTMANN

Technically, yes.

KATHERINE

No will can dictate who should run what is now, not only technically, but legitimately, mine. Who drew this up?

HARTMANN

Your father. Soon as Audrey told him of your impending return.

KATHERINE

What fucking century was he living in? And you advised him on this?

HARTMANN

He was adamant about wanting young Hamilton on board for some reason.

KATHERINE

Adamant?

Hartmann shrugs, as if to say *don't ask me why*. He casually consults his wristwatch.

INT. EXCLUSIVE CLUB - DAY

Hartmann and Katherine take lunch. A silver service affair in an exclusive city club. Plenty of old-world money.

Katherine, the youngest of only a few women present, earns plenty of stares.

HARTMANN

All things are contestable, my dear. All it takes is --

KATHERINE
Raymond. There's nothing to
contest. Okay.

Hartmann's eyes narrow, to the point of appearing malicious.

KATHERINE
Don't have to be a lawyer to figure
that one out.

HARRY PURCELL (late 60s) whose apparel affords him landed
gentry status, walks past, casually acknowledges Hartmann.

PURCELL
Raymond. How's the new venture
coming along?

Hartmann shifts in his seat, uneasy with the question.

Purcell turns his attention to Katherine.

HARTMANN
Oh, er, Harry Purcell, Katherine.
Katherine Spencer.

A small but perceptible nod of recognition before Purcell's
demeanour changes, becomes awkward in her presence.

PURCELL
Miss Spencer.

Hartmann places a patronising hand upon Katherine's.

Keen to depart, Purcell adds:

PURCELL
My condolences. Apologies for not
making it to the funeral.

On his departure, Katherine delicately removes her hand.

KATHERINE
New venture?

HARTMANN
Client confidentiality.

They continue their lunch in silence.

INT. STUDY - DAY

On the desk, below some shelves laden with old ledger books,
an old dust covered Compaq PC comes to life.

Katherine searches high and low, her eyes scan this way and that, her facial contortions betray her chagrin.

The NOISE of a vehicle (O.S.) prompts her to switch off the ancient device.

EXT. HOMESTEAD - DAY

A removal van parked in front of the verandah, signage:
"MELVIN MOVING MELBOURNE"

LABOURERS struggle to get a massive queen-sized timber bed-head up the verandah steps.

INT. KATHERINE'S BEDROOM - NIGHT

In the darkness, Katherine wide-awake in her massive bed.

INT. STUDY/HARTMANN'S OFFICE - DAY - INTERCUT

A number of old-style ledgers stacked on the Study desk.

Katherine on her phone.

KATHERINE

What do you mean, that's the way he did business?

HARTMANN'S OFFICE

HARTMANN

Exactly that.

Hartmann marks time in his swivel office chair, his smartphone on the desk on speaker.

KATHERINE

But surely you must have details of his undertakings? You were his lawyer, after all.

Hartmann pinches the bridge of his nose, unhappy with the cross-examination.

HARTMANN

Lawyer, yes, but not his business director. I simply advised him on the legalities of any dealings he was involved in. All I know is, he sacked his accountant years ago.

Katherine paces the study floor.

KATHERINE

So, you've no copies of contracts, no memoranda of transactions? You know, those things that competent lawyers normally keep.

HARTMANN

Young lady, I'm sure you will also appreciate the principle of confidentiality.

Silence.

HARTMANN

And I might add, such confidential correspondence as might exist does not form part of the estate. I refer you to clause --

KATHERINE

Yes, I wondered why he included that. What didn't he want me to know?

HARTMANN

Not part of my brief. But I can assure you that this office does not have in its possession any materials that might be relevant to your current pursuits.

Katherine contains her anger.

KATHERINE

No wonder we've gone to the dogs.

Katherine hangs up on him, stares derisively at the stack of older style accounts ledgers.

She opens the top one. The entries are all in copper-plate.

Audrey pokes her head in the door.

AUDREY

It's arrived. Out the front.

Katherine closes the ledger, calls back to Audrey.

KATHERINE

A pot of coffee might be in order, thanks. Might take some setting up.

EXT. HOMESTEAD - VERANDAH - DAY - CONTINUOUS

A VAN DRIVER, rugged up against the chill, leans against a contractor van, parked on newly laid gravel.

Katherine approaches from the Front Door, points to the side of the building.

KATHERINE

My study's around this side, so what do you think?

VAN DRIVER

Pity you can't pick up the fixed wireless.

KATHERINE

Either way, at least it's the twenty-first century.

INT. STUDY - DAY - LATE AFTERNOON

LAPTOP COMPUTER SCREEN:

The *Australian Wool Innovation* website - < Welcome to Wool.com >

A few keyboard strokes navigate to the *Market Intelligence* page and the current wool price - at a record high.

Audrey, in street clothes, enters the study.

AUDREY

More coffee before I leave?

Katherine concentrates intently on the screen, only half turns.

KATHERINE

I'll make some later, thanks.

AUDREY

So it's all up and running?

Katherine nods.

Audrey reciprocates.

AUDREY

Yes, well your dinner's on the Rayburn. Don't let it spoil. I'll see you in a couple of days then.

KATHERINE

Okay.

Audrey remains at the door, intrigued by the computer screen.

Finally Katherine turns fully to her.

KATHERINE

You sure you're okay with three days a week? I know it's a bit awkward after all these years. But until we get this place back on a proper footing --

Audrey smiles diplomatically.

AUDREY

Fine, fine. I can do with the break. Help out a bit more in the presbytery.

A coda as she leaves...

AUDREY

Lord knows it needs it.

But Katherine is too intent on the screen.

EXT. HOMESTEAD - NIGHT

A satellite dish mounted on the side wall above a window dimly lit with a bluish light from within.

INT. STUDY - NIGHT

Silence.

Katherine surfs the internet, an electric bar heater set upon a chair close by. On the desk, alongside the laptop, a dinner plate with the few remains of a meal, a drained cafetière.

INT. SUV VEHICLE - DAY

The car's heater gently blows some wisps of Katherine's auburn hair. She's captivated by the scene outside.

EXT. PADDOCK - DAY

Cory picks up an inanimate, new-born lamb, a concerned ewe looks on.

He massages the animal all over, blows into the lamb's mouth and magically brings it to life.

He wipes the sleeve of his Dryza-bone across his own mouth, warms the lamb against the soft lining inside the jacket.

A vehicle door SLAMS (O.S.). Cory looks up.

Katherine approaches, dons a suede sheepskin rider jacket over her Aran jumper.

KATHERINE

Well done. Hope it grows to be a good breeder for us.

CORY

If that's still the intention.

KATHERINE

I believe so. But I'm not sure if this mob are up to scratch. Was wondering. Do you know of any good stock agents in these parts?

Cory carries the bedraggled lamb to its bleating mother.

CORY

Hear there's a bloke down in Naracoorte. Ogilvie. Got a good reputation.

The newborn nuzzles into its mother's teat, its tail gyrates.

Katherine lifts the collar of her jacket against the chill.

KATHERINE

Ta. Perhaps you could also help me in another way.

INT. STUDY - NIGHT

A fire blazes in the fire-place, a stack of logs alongside.

Katherine, weary-eyed, fights to stay awake, works her laptop.

LAPTOP SCREEN:

Links of the Australian Wool Fashion Awards site DISPLAYS FASHION TRENDS USING AUSTRALIAN WOOL.

INT. EXHIBITION HALL - DAY

A pulsing, clubbing atmosphere in a hall decked out with rural paraphernalia.

MODELS strut the fashion catwalk. Promotion of pure new wool everywhere.

In her prime position seat, Katherine takes in the glamour, the style. Her phone BEEPS a reminder. She consults a program she holds, excuses herself and departs.

EXT. SHOWGROUNDS - AGRICULTURE HALL - DAY

A red-on-white SALE sign flutters over the entrance to this huge pavilion.

PATRONS stream in.

INT. AGRICULTURAL HALL - DAY

Amid the predominantly male congregation, resplendent in their RM Williams rural apparel, Katherine attracts the attention of some of the YOUNGER MALES.

She breathes in the ambience.

AUCTION RING

A Handler parades a most regal looking ram.

VIEWING AREA

Nearby is Harry Purcell. He doffs his Akubra to Katherine.

She wanders over to him.

PURCELL

Miss Spencer.

KATHERINE

Sorry, but I didn't quite get your name when we last met.

PURCELL

Purcell. Harold Purcell. Down south, Keppoch way, in amongst the wine country.

Katherine dwells a moment, not altogether pleased.

PURCELL

(awkward)

Perhaps you remember my daughter
Jennifer? And your late brother
Richard?

She nods, comments brashly.

KATHERINE

Yes of course. Ricky ... and Jen.

Purcell is reluctant to pursue this line of discourse.

PURCELL

Getting to know our microns are we?

An AUCTIONEER (O.S.)...

AUCTIONEER (O.S.)

(overlapping dialogue)

*Ladies and gentlemen. From the
Coona Duringa stud at Wilmington.
The highlight of the day's
proceedings, I present Lot 178.
Never, since the days of Sir James,
has there been a more magnificent
beast. I'll now open the bidding --*
(Auctioneer's VOICE
continues under,
accepting bids...)

KATHERINE

A bit like art isn't? --

PURCELL

Much more than that, young lady.

KATHERINE

Come now. We all know a
Michelangelo when we see one.

AUCTION RING

The burgeoning, rolling chest of the majestic ram...

KATHERINE (O.S.)

... and the David I see before me
now will scare the tits off Dolly
Parton ...

The Handler turns the animal to display its gross dangling
genitals.

KATHERINE (O.S.)
... hopefully perform like the
legendary Harry Reems ... and give
me, no doubt, a consistent eighteen
micron clip for which I know those
gentlemen over there ...

A small group of ASIAN MEN huddle in conference nearby.

KATHERINE
... will gladly pay at least a
thousand twenty clean. Not to
mention the discerning Italians.

She looks at the gob-smacked Purcell.

KATHERINE
And yourself?

PURCELL
Nothing much that appeals.

A second to compose himself.

PURCELL
Seriously thinking of diversifying,
quite frankly.

It's a comment out of left field for Katherine.

PURCELL
You've not been swayed yet?

Katherine is ignorant.

PURCELL
Hartmann and those, you know, those
woolly things from South America.

KATHERINE
Alpacas?

PURCELL
Dumber than sheep. Probably wants a
repeat of the late eighties, only
with one of those beasts.

Katherine, bemused by this last comment, is distracted by an
announcement in the Background.

AUCTIONEER (O.S.)
I'm bid eight thousand dollars.
Eight thousand I am bid.

Katherine looks towards a man in the crowd, LINDSAY OGILVIE (late 40s), who gives her a reassuring nod and thumbs up.

She reciprocates, turns back to Purcell.

KATHERINE

So, what's all this about al --?

But Purcell has taken the opportunity to move on.

EXT. SHOWGROUNDS - DAY

SERIES OF SHOTS

- Katherine takes in the crowd at the showgrounds;
- the ubiquitous Country Women's Association/Rural Women's Bureau stands;
- farm machinery displays...

She moves toward a huge marquee.

EXT. MARQUEE - DAY

A sign at the entrance reads: *"WELCOME TO TATIARA - THE GOOD COUNTRY"*

INT. HUGE MARQUEE - DAY

Katherine wanders through a display stand set up by the Tatiara District Council. On an easel, a photo list of the Executive and Councillors.

She gives this a cursory glance, places a finger on a name.

An attendant, LEONIE MAJOR (50s), approaches.

MAJOR

Leonie Major, Community Relations.
Can I help?

KATHERINE

Just browsing. I notice the name
Hartmann.

MAJOR

Hartmann, yes.

KATHERINE

I didn't realize he was on this council, he being a city dweller.

MAJOR

If he's a ratepayer then he'd be eligible for election.

KATHERINE

So he's a property owner?

She approaches a poster of a satellite photo of the District.

MAJOR

In there, somewhere. Here, with compliments.

She hands over a rolled up poster secured with a rubber band.

INT. STUDY - DAY

Katherine peruses the poster of the satellite photo of the Tatiara District spread out over her desk.

She leans back and stretches, notices on the wall an old aerial survey photo of the area, with Tatiara Park itself outlined. She's piqued.

Certain sections of land are crudely scribbled over in pencil.

EXT. OPEN SCRUBLAND - DAY

The broad expanse of one of the grazing paddocks, a sunny day but storm clouds gathering. A helmeted Cory, Dryza-bone, on trail bike, separates various sheep from a huge flock.

Katherine arrives at a trot on Charlie but keeps her distance, content to watch.

Cory comes up alongside Katherine, disturbs her mount. Her soothing strokes settle the animal.

KATHERINE

I've been doing some more checking. Found some old maps and surveys.

She scans the surrounds.

KATHERINE

It seems the little empire has
indeed shrunk. Bits and pieces let
go over the years.

Without warning, Cory slips the bike back into gear.

CORY

Hang on a minute.

He rides off to regroup the small number of sheep he had
separated from the main flock.

Katherine watches, impressed.

On his return

KATHERINE

For some reason the old man off-
loaded much of the Park and just
allowed what's left of the place go
downhill. Be that as it may, I was
wondering what you know of alpacas?

Before he can respond, she heads off, regroups the same small
mob of sheep Cory had separated from the main flock.

Cory is duly impressed.

On her return

KATHERINE

Alpacas. They say they're dumber
than sheep.

CORY

Hard to tell by looking. You want
to invest in them?

KATHERINE

Depends. We're at the mercy of the
markets, so I'll be making my
decisions accordingly.

She turns around in her saddle to look off.

KATHERINE

And by the look of it we'll all be
at the mercy of something else
pretty soon.

Cory turns in the direction of the gathering storm clouds.

KATHERINE

Meanwhile, I have more surveying to do before things turn nasty.

She rides off, leaves Cory to his own immediate tasks.

EXT. OPEN SCRUBLAND - DAY - LATER

Rumbling thunder. Lightning arcs the darkened landscape.

Cory makes his way as best he can along a track.

Up ahead, Charlie wanders disoriented. Cory alights his bike, guardedly approaches the horse, takes its reins.

With Charlie in tow, he returns to his bike and slowly moves off, tracking as the gloomy sky closes in.

LATER

Light rain. Cory comes across a dazed Katherine lying close by a rocky outcrop.

He alights the bike, flips the reins over the bike's handlebar, undertakes a preliminary examination.

Outwardly, Katherine has little more than a grazed cheek.

He cradles her. She opens her eyes, recognizes him.

CORY

No helmet, eh? You feel up to being moved?

She nods feebly then closes her eyes again, yielding.

He surveys his immediate surroundings, looks towards some of the rocky outcrop. With due care, he picks her up and carries her to an inconspicuous opening among the rocks.

INT. CAVERN - CONTINUOUS

Katherine stirs as Cory eases her down on the cavern floor.

KATHERINE

Do I know this place?

CORY

I doubt it. Not a place for Europeans, apparently.

KATHERINE

In other words I shouldn't be here.

CORY

Not sure that I should be. My dad brought me here once when I was little. Just before we left. A place of special significance. Still, it's probably best we stay for the duration.

He leaves.

Katherine peers around in the eerie emptiness.

Cory returns with her dampened saddle and does his best to get her into a comfortable position.

Without further ado he exits the cavern again.

Katherine winces as she removes her smart phone from her jeans pocket, puts her thumbs to work. She frowns.

A sodden Cory returns, this time with arms laden with dead wood, twigs and grasses, some reasonably dry.

CORY

Doubt if you'll get reception in these parts.

She winces as she returns the phone to her pocket.

He shakes his Dryza-bone jacket, drapes it over her, takes a folded sheet of paper from his moleskins.

CORY

My to do list for today.
(looks around cavern)
This is not on it.

He sets up the fire with dry grass, a few twigs, tears the sheet of paper in pieces to add.

KATHERINE

Just for the record, I don't smoke.

Cory turns to her with a feigned frown.

CORY

Nor I.

He holds two twigs in his hands, re-assures her.

CORY
Shouldn't be a problem though.

He turns his back on her, leans over the small pyre, goes through the motion of rubbing the two sticks.

After a BEAT ... a twirl of smoke eddies upwards.

Katherine is impressed.

Cory turns to her with a cheeky smile, and reveals a cigarette lighter which he returns to his shirt pocket.

He settles by the fire and does well to make a comfortable niche for himself.

KATHERINE
Thanks.

Cory fuels the fire.

CORY
Afraid there's nothing for dinner.

They stare, mesmerized, at the burgeoning flames.

KATHERINE
So what brought you to these parts?

CORY
My father's suggestion. He worked around here for quite a while. Many years ago. My family were in this district for a few generations. But most of us departed years ago. Although I still have an auntie around here somewhere, I believe.

Katherine tries to move, winces.

Cory settles her back as comfortable as possible against her saddle.

CORY
Seemed like the right time to come back. If only to look after you.

KATHERINE
Normally I do a good enough job myself. But on this occasion.

She leans back and dozes. Cory attends the fire.

EXT. HOMESTEAD - MORNING

A fresh sunny morning.

Hartmann by his 4-WD parked at the foot of the steps to the verandah, his body obscuring the signage on the door.

The trail bike approaches, crunches over the new gravel.

A helmeted Katherine clings to Cory's waist on the meagre rider's seat, Charlie in tow. They pull up to the steps.

Katherine eases from the bike, adjusts her spine, returns Cory's helmet and Dryza-bone, pats Charlie's neck, takes the verandah steps one at a time.

CORY
I'll settle Charlie.

Cory slowly leads the horse off.

Hartmann stares at Katherine, at Cory, again at Katherine.

Without waiting for an invitation, he follows her inside.

INT. HOMESTEAD - HALLWAY - CONTINUOUS

Hartmann trudges after Katherine down the Hallway.

KATHERINE
What brings you to the good country
at this unearthly hour?

HARTMANN
Thought I'd fit in a quickie while
I'm --

She turns back to him, raises her eyebrows at the term.

He regains his composure.

HARTMANN
Down here on business. Elsewhere in
the district.

KATHERINE
Your new venture?

The comment un-nerves Hartmann.

Not waiting for a reply, she delicately mounts the stairs, passes Audrey dusting the bannisters.

KATHERINE
You won't mind if I tidy up a bit?

LANDING

Katherine turns back to the not so athletic Hartmann, and throws him an impish smile.

KATHERINE
In case you're wondering, I spent
an most enchanting night in a magic
cave.

The flippant comment causes Audrey consternation.

KATHERINE
You know we have caves down here?

Hartmann says nothing as he follows her to her bedroom.

KATHERINE'S BEDROOM

Katherine enters, leaves the door ajar, an open invitation for Hartmann to enter which, sheepishly, he does.

KATHERINE
Can do with a quickie, myself.

She enters a small ante-room.

Over the GUSHING sound of a shower.

KATHERINE (O.S.)
So, down here for business, eh?

HARTMANN
A little matter with Harry --
(he checks himself)
I just thought I'd check on your
welfare while I was here.

KATHERINE (O.S.)
Harry Purcell? Funny, I ran into
him not that long ago. Might try
and do business with him myself.
Seemed to imply he was moving out
of wool. Looking to diversify.

Hartmann walks around the room, takes in the feminine touches Katherine has added.

HARTMANN

I wouldn't read too much into --

But he's cut short as she continues to goad him.

KATHERINE (O.S.)

I understand there are new markets
out there.

Hartmann sits on her bed, uneasy.

KATHERINE (O.S.)

Like, maybe refurbish the shearers'
quarters for the holiday makers.
Cave exploring? What do you think?

SILENCE

Katherine, in silky kimono robe, appears at the opening to
the ante-room, towels her hair, alluring.

KATHERINE

Well, what do you think?

Hartmann hastily stands. Dumbstruck by her appearance, he
becomes jelly, unable to respond.

KATHERINE

Come on, a man of your experience
must have some idea of what to do?

He's thrown by the double entendre. Sensing this, she
continues bluntly.

KATHERINE

The markets. That's your forte,
isn't it?

HARTMANN

Well, yes. Perhaps give it some
thought.

He consults his watch, edges to the door.

KATHERINE

Just a quickie, eh?

He feigns a chuckle, slips out without further ado.

Katherine sits at her dresser, examines her cheek.

EXT. HOMESTEAD - VERANDAH - DAY

Father Jameson, alone at the end of the verandah, gazes across the landscape and the remnants of morning mist.

KATHERINE (O.S.)
Really is the good country.

Katherine, a small band-aid covering her grazed cheek, ambles to the cane setting, flops in a chair.

KATHERINE
Or God's, in your case.

They both look up to greet Audrey with a tray of tea and biscuits. Aloof, she places the tray on the table, departs.

KATHERINE
There must be something in the air.
All of a sudden it's raining men.

FR JAMESON
Can't speak for others. But this
man's visit is purely social.

Katherine eyes him suspiciously as she pours the tea.

FR JAMESON
Maybe a minor ulterior motive. I
feel I owe it to Old Tom to --

KATHERINE
To what?

FR JAMESON
His wish was that I monitor your
spiritual progress.

KATHERINE
With respect, it's progressing well
enough thank you.

FR JAMESON
Perhaps we might see you at mass
again soon? Maybe even confession.
You used to be a little Miss
Regular. Before you shuffled off to
boarding school.

KATHERINE
Shunted off, you mean?

He digests the truth of this.

KATHERINE
Besides, it meant something then.

FR JAMESON
But not now?

Katherine sips her tea and looks out on the landscape.

KATHERINE
I'm beginning to feel there's a
different spirit out there.

FR JAMESON
Put it down to The Lord. He really
does move in mysterious ways.

KATHERINE
So mysterious you'd think he was a
woman, eh? Although these days --

Touché

FR JAMESON
Yes, well, he ... she's always
there in case you get lonely.

Katherine offers a dismissive smile.

FR JAMESON
Not a likely scenario?

An impasse.

FR JAMESON
So much for the spiritual. Look,
not meaning to get personal --

KATHERINE
But --

FR JAMESON
Now that you're back here for the
long haul, might I suggest that the
standing of a woman in your
position, in these parts, will be
enhanced with a --

KATHERINE
Serious?

FR JAMESON
There will be times, yes. With the
right man.

Down here, a single woman like you could be considered a waste of one of God's valued children.

KATHERINE

Is that the man speaking? Or the man of the cloth?

He shuffles in his seat.

KATHERINE

Never fear. I'm a long way from the nunnery yet. It's simply a question of fulfilment, which, I'm sure you appreciate, is not prescriptive.

He opens his palms, surrendering to the logic.

KATHERINE

Besides, some might argue it's you who's a waste of one of God's valued children.

She doesn't allow a response, but looks out again to the property beyond, continues

KATHERINE

At the moment I have plenty to occupy me. I'm going to get this place back on its feet again. With or without God's help.

She deposits her cup on the table and stands.

He casually finishes his tea, stands also, leaving the remains of their repast.

FR JAMESON

I'll just say goodbye to one who, hopefully, has not lost her faith.

He strolls back along the verandah and enters the homestead.

KATHERINE

While I check on one who has no need of it.

Katherine skips over the balustrade, grimaces at the jolt, and heads gingerly off in the direction of the stables.

EXT. PADDOCK - DAY

Katherine atop Charlie at a walk, revisits the newly erected high fence.

She pricks her ears at a foreign SOUND from beyond the fence, unseen - harsh machinery that settles into a gentle purr, starts up again.

INT. STUDY - DAY

The aerial survey photo of Tatiara Park on the wall above the study desk. Her phone open.

Katherine uses a felt tip to mark out, as best she can, the route she and Charlie had taken earlier that day.

She places an 'X' within a broad circle on the south-west section.

She sits, elbows on the desk, supports her forehead on her palms, bemused. Feels the bruise on her cheek, gives it a gentle massage. Her bearing brightens.

INT. MANAGER'S HOUSE - MAIN ROOM - EVENING

Well-stocked bookshelves, a gentle fire burning in the fireplace.

Cory, well groomed, reads a hardback by the light of a standard lamp beside the plush leather lounge chair.

The faint sound of a vehicle pulling up outside.

Footsteps upon the verandah.

A gentle TAP on the front door.

Cory leaves the book on the chair, goes into

HALLWAY/FRONT DOOR

He opens the front door, reveals Katherine, hint of abrasion on her cheek, illuminated by the hallway light, hands behind her back.

CORY
No broken bones I see.

Pleased to see her, he relieves her of her scarf and sheepskin jacket, slips them over the pedestal hatstand, ushers her through the door on the left, into

MAIN ROOM

She offers him a gift - a bottle of port.

KATHERINE

I couldn't think what else. But thank you any way.

She moves instinctively toward the fire.

Cory is ambivalent about the gift.

CORY

Aha. In vino veritas.

She is bemused by the comment.

Cory takes the bottle to a sideboard, on which is a salver with four shot glasses, removes a folded handkerchief from his pocket, wipes away remnants of dust from the bottle.

KATHERINE

From the cellar, sorry.

Cory removes the cork, pours one full glass, another only halfway.

He turns to see her standing by the fireplace, admiring a ram's skull resting on the mantelpiece below a shotgun mounted on the chimney.

She accepts the glass he offers, notices his smaller drink.

CORY

I rarely indulge. Seen what it does to some peoples.

KATHERINE

Perhaps --

He raises his glass, interrupts her. She follows suit, they both sip.

She looks intently at him, studies him.

He breaks the silence.

CORY

So, what makes me tick, eh?

Katherine is taken aback.

CORY

Isn't that how these conversations go? Truth in wine? Loosen the tongue, reveal all?

Katherine braces herself, piqued by the 'accusation'.

KATHERINE

Actually, apart from discussing our first clip, I was hoping to sound you out about an issue of concern.

She places her glass on the mantelpiece, turns toward the door.

CORY

I didn't mean to offend. It's just that you were looking at me --

KATHERINE

I was looking at you?

An awkward situation.

CORY

Yes. Like you were assessing ...
I'm sorry.

Katherine softens.

KATHERINE

I didn't think there'd be much more I'd want to know.

CORY

Probably not.

But somehow she is not convinced.

KATHERINE

But if there is, I'm bound to find out...

She lingers a moment by the door.

KATHERINE

... sooner or later.

Again she looks him intently in the eye. She relents, returns, picks up her glass, sips again.

CORY

Perhaps you'd rather I were not
here at Tatiara.

She moves ever so slightly closer to him.

KATHERINE

I have no qualms. I don't doubt
your qualifications.

Closer still, she raises her glass as a toast. Cory obliges.
She finishes her glass, flicks it with a finger, the PING of
superior crystal. She is impressed.

CORY

Pass muster?

Katherine smile her approval.

KATHERINE

Pity I'm driving.

CORY

About this issue of concern?

KATHERINE

I'll take a raincheck.

Cory disposes of the glasses, escorts her to the door.

EXT. STREET - NARACORTE - DAY

Accompanied by Ogilvie, the Stock Agent, Katherine emerges
from the modernized old building, offices of the ELLIS-SMYTH
RURAL AGENCIES - ESTABLISHED 1864.

He heartily shakes the hand she offers.

OGILVIE

You'll find this one of the better
gangs around. Should work well with
this new man of yours.

Katherine raises an eyebrow. He smiles reassuringly,
continues to shake her hand.

OGILVIE

News gets around. He seems to have
things in hand.

KATHERINE

Always good in a man.

She finally frees her hand from his.

KATHERINE

Once again, thanks.

She moves along the footpath, window shops some of the establishments, comes to ...

ART GALLERY MUSEUM

She passes a group of NUNGA (First Nations) WOMEN congregated outside the restored old stone building. They all avert their eyes, except AUNTIE (70s), who acknowledges Katherine with a familial nod. Katherine returns an awkward smile as the others whisper (MOS) among themselves.

Katherine continues on, passes the entrance to the Gallery.

A sandwich-board sign outside promotes an exhibition within:
"2019 FIRST NATIONS - SAT SEPT 21 TO FRI OCT 18"

Katherine considers a moment ... continues on her way.

INT. SHEARING SHED - DAY

Adorning one wall, memorabilia from the past.

Katherine peers through the main door, enters, wanders about, an intruder.

Cory, with a set of clippers, checks the drive mechanism of a shearing bay. He casually registers her, without pausing.

From the wall, Katherine takes an ancient pair of hand shears, follows Cory as he goes to the next bay.

KATHERINE

Takes me back. Always looked
forward to this time of the year.
Tried to help whenever I could.
Along with Richard, my brother ...
my late brother. The old man was
never keen on me being here,
though. What about you?

CORY

My old man did a bit of it. When he
could get it. I tagged along on
occasions, watching others. Worked
as a rouse-about now and then in
sheds when I was in high school.

He wipes perspiration from his brow, indicates the mechanical shears.

CORY

Realised I wasn't cut out to make a living from these.

Katherine tries to operate the hand shears she holds, with little success. She switches hands, accidentally drops them.

They land point first, sticking into the preserved timber floor boards, only centimetres from Cory's boot.

He calmly bends over, retrieves the shears, hands them back.

CORY

Dangerous in the wrong hands.

KATHERINE

I'll bear that in mind.

Katherine returns the old shears to their peg on the wall.

KATHERINE

I'll get out of your way, then.

Cory moves to a refrigerated water fountain.

KATHERINE

Yell out if you need anything else.

A cursory nod, he watches her depart.

Alone, Cory turns to the water fountain and pours himself a pannikin, drinks.

INT. SHEARING SHED - DAY

ANOTHER DAY

Cory, navy singlet flecked with fleece, finishes a pannikin of water, wipes perspiration from his brow.

A hive of activity. SHEARERS of mixed gender at full throttle, faces dripping with perspiration.

Machinery in action, drive belts whirring, shorn sheep pushed through chutes. Cory plays rouse-about, oversees the various tasks.

Here and there, Shearers make a chalk mark on their respective tally boards. Some key in on their devices.

Other ROUSE-ABOUTS gather the fleece, fling it over the grated table.

A CLASSER discards the skirtings, selects a sample, works the crimp in his fingers, satisfied.

INT. STUDY - DAY

Katherine, at the computer, samples of the clip on the desk.

LAPTOP SCREEN:

"WOOL.COM WEBSITE" - spreadsheet

Katherine compiles data on the wool-clip from the property on to a spreadsheet, pleased with the results.

INT. HOTEL FRONT BAR - NIGHT

A few of the shearers from the Tatiara Park, among other LOCALS, socialize. It's a pleasant enough affair; a few are inebriated; others downright drunk.

At one end of the bar a collection of Whites and Aboriginals play pool. PUB MUSIC plays loudly.

EXT. NARACOORTE - TOWN HALL - NIGHT

Up-market vehicles clog the main street outside the spotlight Town Hall.

A scruffy looking Mercedes parked a short distance away from the lights of the Town Hall. Two YOUNG COCKYS (farmers) dressed in dinner suits emerge, part consumed liquor bottles in hand.

INT. TOWN HALL - NIGHT

A grandiose Hall, legacy of the good times in rural Australia. A Ball in progress. Affluence abounds.

The local four piece party band plays on stage.

BAR

Hartmann with his younger partner SALLY (late 20s), tarted-up and looking out of place.

A Ned Kelly lookalike photographer, PAUL CORBIN (late 20s), about to take a snap of them, stops, looks beyond the couple, his attention commanded elsewhere.

Hartmann turns, his mouth drops.

GUESTS look toward the entrance foyer, mutter to each other, resume their dancing... after a fashion.

ENTRANCE

Katherine, resplendent in chic and revealing black evening dress, minimal jewelry, accompanied by Cory Hamilton looking every bit the matinee idol.

They are greeted by the MC for the evening, Harry Purcell.

PURCELL
(barely acknowledges Cory)
You made it, after all. Many a year
since you graced this hall.

KATHERINE
Not since Richard --

PURCELL
Many a year.

An Awkward moment.

Corbin arrives. A convenient out for Purcell who turns quickly to greet other new arrivals.

After a snap by Corbin, Cory leads Katherine away.

Purcell calls back to Katherine.

PURCELL
By the way, I have three ladies
available, if you're still
interested.

Katherine nods appreciatively.

KATHERINE
Give me a few days. Get these
formalities out of the way.

A perfunctory nod from Purcell who turns to the new arrivals.

Cory escorts Katherine to an isolated table with its white, starched tablecloth.

TABLE

Hartmann arrives, Sally in tow, for a contrived encounter.

HARTMANN

Well. Who do we have here?

Katherine looks up.

KATHERINE

And good evening to you too,
Raymond. You know Mister Hamilton?

Hartmann all but ignores Cory who in turn accommodates him with a diplomatic nod.

KATHERINE

But I don't believe we've met --

HARTMANN

Oh, er, Sally. Sally Fitzpatrick.

Sally smiles her best society smile possible.

KATHERINE

You're not from the district?

Hartmann intervenes.

HARTMANN

Not from this district, no.

The uncomfortable Sally sways to the music, looks for an excuse to end these proceedings.

SALLY

So just love this song.

Hartmann rolls his eyes. No escape. He escorts her off.

KATHERINE

They tell me the punch is highly
recommended at do's like these.

CORY

See what I can muster.

Cory heads off ... just as the Music comes to an end.

BAR

Hartmann escorts a sullen Sally back to the bar stool.

No sooner seated, she sips her punch, dribbles a little.
She grabs a tissue from her evening purse, wipes her chin.

SALLY

Damn. Save me seat.

She hops off her stool.

Hartmann shrugs indifferently. His gaze follows her.

Sally passes Cory at the other end of the cocktail bar,
follows the sign to the Ladies' Room.

Hartmann turns his attention to

TABLE

Katherine alone.

Without formality, Hartmann flops into the chair next to her.

HARTMANN

You certainly know how to turn
heads.

KATHERINE

Heads turn as they will.

He comes on strong.

HARTMANN

I sometimes wonder what your father
would be thinking.

KATHERINE

I'm sure most people wondered that
all his life.

HARTMANN

Probably turning in his grave.

Katherine dismisses this comment with a shake of the head.

KATHERINE

If there's room in hell to turn.

HARTMANN

I mean really. A common farm
labourer.

KATHERINE

Oh, I don't know. He's rather uncommon if you ask me. A rare breed indeed.

HARTMANN

Indeed.

KATHERINE

In case you've forgotten, he is the manager of the Park, appointed by none other than my adamant father.

HARTMANN

And the rest of the world speculates why.

KATHERINE

Are you speaking out of concern for my welfare? Or perhaps there's something else on your mind?

HARTMANN

How do you mean?

KATHERINE

Clause a, part 2, ... until such time as my daughter shall take a man in marriage, which ever event is the sooner --

Hartmann runs a finger inside his collar. Cory arrives back with drinks.

The music starts again.

THE BAR

Sally at her barstool, sans Hartmann. She surveys the scene.

KATHERINE (O.S.)

Perhaps we can have a chat over morning tea tomorrow?

One of the young Cockys from the Mercedes approaches and requests a dance. Sally is unsure.

Hartmann arrives back, no hesitation, nods his consent.

He sits there, nurses his drink. The band plays on.

EXT. TOWN HALL - NIGHT

The spotlights are doused. The Guests drift out of the Town Hall, make their way to various vehicles.

Hartmann exits alone, stands on the footpath a moment, surveys the surroundings.

Other Guests continue along the now dimly lit footpath, pass the scruffy looking Mercedes which rocks and rolls.

Hartmann, hands thrust in suit trouser pockets, heads off down the street in the opposite direction.

INT/EXT. DUAL CAB UTE TRAVELLING - NIGHT

Cory drives through the night, a drowsy Katherine by his side. Comfortable in the lambskin-lined seat, she stares out into the country night, their formal attire less formal now.

KATHERINE
Penny for your thoughts.

CORY
Purcell.

KATHERINE
Yeah?

CORY
When you mentioned Richard ...

She goes quiet.

CORY
A sore point?

KATHERINE
A sore point.

They drive on in silence. She steals a glance at his manly profile, a curious twinkle in her eyes.

INT. DINING ROOM - NIGHT

A single standard lamp illuminates the room. Katherine, in her chic evening dress, stares at the photograph on the wall of the young man et al in the sports car.

She reaches up, removes it, leaves a light patch on the wall.

Anguish. She smashes it on the back of a chair, sobs.

INT. PARISH CHURCH - DAY

A PARISHIONER exits the confessional.

Katherine, seated on the end of the adjacent pew, consults her smartwatch, stands and enters.

CONFESSIONAL/PRIEST'S CHAMBER - INTERCUT

FR JAMESON (O.S.)
Yes my child.

KATHERINE
Was passing by and thought, Long
time between drinks.

FR JAMESON (O.S.)
It's customary to begin with --

KATHERINE
(feigns contrition)
Forgive me father, for I have
sinned. Lately I've been having
carnal thoughts. Not unusual
perhaps for a woman in my position.

PRIEST'S CHAMBER

FR JAMESON
If I might interrupt. Satisfy
yourself that you appreciate the
difference between love and lust.
If your thoughts are directed
toward the former then perhaps it
should not really be considered a
sin. But only you can determine
that. Tell me.

KATHERINE
I'm not sure that I can. I'm not
sure that there is any difference.

FR JAMESON
Do I take it there is an object of
your desire?

KATHERINE
Desire? I think we can safely say
there is.

FR JAMESON

And how long has this person been
in your life?

KATHERINE

It feels like I've known him most
of my life.

Father Jameson nods paternally.

KATHERINE

But in reality, just a few short
months. Only recently arrived in
the district.

The Priest shows concern beyond that of the Father Confessor,
turns and peers through the fret-work partition.

FR JAMESON

Then I would counsel against haste
in this affair.

KATHERINE

But you suggested my standing in
these parts would improve with a
man by my side.

FR JAMESON

Still, I would counsel against
haste.

Katherine now peers through the fretwork at Fr Jameson.

KATHERINE

Can't imagine why.

She consults her phone, ignores any other formalities of the
confessional, stands and exits the cubicle.

Father Jameson sits a moment, sweats, fumbles his Rosary with
a trembling hand, a moment of nervous reckoning.

INT. HOTEL DINING ROOM - DAY

An ornate, old heritage hotel, pressed metal ceiling.

Hartmann toys with his ham and eggs.

Accompanying him at table, Katherine, still in confessional
garb, delicately consumes a cronut, sips her coffee.

HARTMANN

I believe she's out riding with her young cocky friend. A pleasant change from the sheep he's probably used to.

KATHERINE

After a good night's sleep, no doubt.

Hartmann is not amused.

HARTMANN

She'd better not get too carried away. Unless she wants to walk back to Adelaide.

He consults his watch.

KATHERINE

You seem put out.

HARTMANN

Was a time I was considered part of the family with a room at the Park for my asking.

KATHERINE

Obviously my father saw you in a different light. Past tense.

He gives her a castigating look.

KATHERINE

Right now, I'm focussed on the Park's future. To this end, I'm investing in breeding stock to ensure not only it's survival but --

HARTMANN

Whatever's best for the Park. Having attended to your father's affairs for all those years, I --

KATHERINE

Was indeed a long time. And being part of the family, you'd have been privy to a lot of information. In the commercial sense.

HARTMANN

Yes, and as a professional, my affairs have always been conducted in the strictest of confidence.

She has the upper hand.

KATHERINE

And I respect you for that,
Raymond.

Her emphasis of his first name unsettles him.

KATHERINE

But being the sole survivor of the
Spencer family, there must be a
wealth of confidential information
to which I now should also be
privy, is that not so?

HARTMANN

Everything is in Old Tom's books.

KATHERINE

Everything? Not very comforting,
considering how old school they
are. Unbelievable.

She changes tack.

KATHERINE

What about our Mister Hamilton?

HARTMANN

What about him?

KATHERINE

It's obvious you'd prefer he wasn't
in his present position.

He pushes his plate away, stares out of the window.

KATHERINE

Now, why should this be, I wonder?

HARTMANN

Funny, I thought it was you who
wanted to see him go. But
something's changed your mind?

Katherine taunts him with a smile, takes a final sip of her
coffee, stands to take her leave.

KATHERINE

He has good credentials. I suspect
that he will remain at Tatiara Park
for quite some time yet.

HARTMANN

For the record, there are a few things you don't know, but maybe ought to --

He is interrupted by the arrival of a WAITRESS come to remove the plates. Katherine turns to exit, checks herself, turns back to Hartmann.

KATHERINE

What I'd like to know, Raymond, is - since when have you been a ratepayer in this district?

He's taken aback by this comment.

KATHERINE

Enjoy your drive back to Adelaide.
(a sadistic smile)
While I take a well earned rest.

She exits.

Hartmann stares daggers at her departing swank backside.

He rudely dismisses the Waitress.

INT. DINING ROOM - DAY

Audrey, cleaning aids in hand, stares at the photo frame on the floor beside the chair. Stoic, she retrieves the actual photo, stows in a drawer of the dresser, proceeds to gather up the mess.

INT/EXT. DUAL CAB UTE TRAVELLING - COUNTRY ROAD - DAY

In the Dual Cab 4-WD ute with its rudimentary steel mesh cage, Cory drives Katherine through the fertile countryside, vineyards in full leaf.

She breaks the silence.

KATHERINE

Had brunch with our friend Raymond, the other day.

Cory gives her a casual glance.

She continues, nonchalant.

KATHERINE

Don't trust him. Bloody lawyer.

Cory chuckles softly.

Katherine peers at him out of the corner of her eye.

EXT. PURCELL PROPERTY - DAY

The ute rumbles over the cattle grid at the entrance and goes a short way along a path ... which becomes an avenue of roses nearer a homestead.

The ute passes the homestead with a short blast of the HORN.

OUTBUILDINGS

The ute cruises past some large corrugated iron sheds and other assorted outbuildings.

A few Kelpie dogs bound alongside, yelp and carry on excitedly, as the vehicle proceeds to

HOLDING YARDS

The ute pulls up outside an old rusty metal gate to a holding yard adjacent to a low roofed structure - more of a canopy than an actual four-walled building.

Purcell emerges from the yard.

The car stops, Purcell leans against the passenger's door, addresses Katherine.

PURCELL

G'day. Found us all right, eh?

He steps back from the ute ...

PURCELL

They're just in here.

... beckons them accompany him, they cruise alongside.

PURCELL

Still not convinced there's a future in this game. And here's you wanting these little ladies. Why?

KATHERINE

I suppose you could say we have the Y, but if there is going to be a future in this game we'll be needing a few good X's.

Purcell nods his understanding.

CORY

And if all goes to plan, we will
have some of the best quality fibre
in the world.

Purcell, unseen by the others, raises an eyebrow, mutters
'we' to himself.

They enter the pen under the canopy holding three ewes.

PURCELL

Yeah but is it gonna pay, given the
way costs are always? This market's
always dodgy --

Assisted by the excited Kelpies, they muster the ewes ...

KATHERINE

Always a market for quality, Harry.
And as they say, quality doesn't
cost, it pays.

... and load the animals into the vehicle's mesh cage.

Purcell ensures the cage is secure, steps back from the ute,
allows the others to enter the front cab.

PURCELL

Fair enough. But personally, I
think your man Hartmann's got a
point. Time to diversify.

Katherine smiles knowingly.

KATHERINE

What's that they say about the
devil you know?

Cory puts the vehicle into drive.

KATHERINE

(an afterthought)
Say hello to Jen for me, if ever
you see her.

Purcell is shaken by this comment from left field.

The ute heads off with its cargo before Purcell can respond.

INT. STOCK SHED - DAY

A clean shed. In a pen, Katherine and Cory assist a VETERINARIAN do unnatural things to the three ewes.

A majestic ram, with gross dangling genitalia, in another small pen nearby stands oblivious.

Katherine's gaze roams from the Vet toward Cory who remains focussed on the animal proceedings.

INT. DINING ROOM - NIGHT

The lights are dimmed.

A bare patch on the wall where the photograph of the young man in the sports car once hung.

On the dining table, two soiled dinner settings, fine china, two claret-stained wine glasses.

INT. KATHERINE'S BEDROOM - NIGHT

In the dimness of Katherine's bedroom two bodies are intimate. They relax. Katherine rolls over, closes her eyes.

Cory stares vacantly at the ceiling, slowly turns to face the placid Katherine, empathy in his eyes.

CORY

The picture on the wall?

KATHERINE

Huh?

CORY

In the dining room. The one that's missing.

KATHERINE

(chooses her words)

My brother Richard, me on my pony,
and --

Cory waits for elaboration.

KATHERINE

And his lady friend. Harry
Purcell's daughter. Jen.

CORY

Sore point?

KATHERINE

Sore point.

CORY

Big plans?

KATHERINE

They were going to marry. So we all thought. But she cheated on him. I caught her screwing some other bloke at the B&S ball. I was a naive, boarding school girl home for the occasion. Sixteen going on seventeen. I told him. He went and got himself shit-faced, drove off into the night, wrapped the car around a tree.

They lie there in silence.

KATHERINE

As far as the rest of the world was concerned, he was just another country road statistic. Sort of shit happens regularly.

A moment of solace.

CORY

The other guy?

KATHERINE

Don't know. Just that he was older. Could have been anyone. Couldn't really see.

CORY

And Jen?

KATHERINE

Ended up in the city and has never returned. As far as I know.

(a coda)

When I told my old man about it, he never forgave me. A few years after that, my mother died.

CORY

Broken heart?

Katherine surreptitiously wipes a lone tear from an eye.

They continue to lie in silence.

CORY

And no-one else knows about this?

KATHERINE

Maybe Hartmann, knowing my old man.
Bastard seems to be privy to all
sorts of things. Don't know if he
ever told Purcell.

Cory leans across, comforts her.

But Katherine is uneasy, her mind working overtime. She sits
up, puts an end to their intimacy.

KATHERINE

He's up to something.

CORY

Who, Purcell?

KATHERINE

No. Well yeah, perhaps. No, I mean
Hartmann.

CORY

Like what?

KATHERINE

Don't know. Why else would he be a
councillor down here?

CORY

Perhaps he has business interests
in the district.

Katherine nods in the affirmative.

CORY

Doesn't strike me as a farmer,
though.

INT. STOCK AGENT OFFICE/STUDY - DAY - INTERCUT

Stock Agent Ogilvie, occupied with paperwork. The desk phone
RINGS. He answers.

OGILVIE

Miss Spencer. Good to hear you.
Well, I stood in line for my dance,
like all the other guys, but it was
obvious you had eyes for only one.

STUDY

A fire rages in the fireplace.

Katherine on her smart phone.

KATHERINE

Sorry I couldn't accommodate you.
Maybe next year.

Ogilvie is an understanding bloke.

KATHERINE

But you might be able to
accommodate me. I understand
Raymond Hartmann is one of our
honourable council members.

OGILVIE

I believe so.

KATHERINE

Which means --

OGILVIE

He obviously has property in these
parts. Somewhere.

KATHERINE

Exactly.

Her silence begs the question.

OGILVIE

But I've no idea where. Never given
it much thought.

KATHERINE

There must have been a broker.

Ogilvie shrugs.

KATHERINE

Conveyancer?

OGILVIE

Himself probably. One way to find
out. Got a pen? Your computer open?

END INTERCUT

INT. STUDY - DAY

On the desk, a notepad with several website addresses scribbled:

NOTEPAD:

"HTTP://WWW.SEARCH.ASIC.GOV.AU/"

"HTTPS://SAPPA.PLAN.SA.GOV.AU"

Katherine searches the internet on her laptop.

LAPTOP COMPUTER SCREEN:

The screen is the page for "PROPERTY LOCATION BROWSER".

Katherine enters the page and progressively homes in on the Tatiara district of south-east South Australia - to the region south-east of Padthaway.

She leans back in her chair, rubs her neck.

A eureka moment.

She jumps up, examines the aerial photo on the wall above the desk, homes in on the "X" she marked there. The location abuts a segment of the Park pencilled out.

She returns to the computer, opens her email, clicks away at the keyboard, mumbles the words and phrases being typed.

KATHERINE

My Dear Mister Hartmann, since my arrival at Tatiara Park... I have made an extensive review of the status of our operations...

INT. HARTMANN'S CITY OFFICE - DAY

Hartmann's face is scarlet with blood pressure as he reads an email on his computer screen.

KATHERINE (V.O.)

I have also undertaken a review of our actual land holdings. It has come to my attention --

He sits a moment, gathers his wits.

With a jolt, he stands, snatches his jacket from a stand and heads out of the office.

OUTER OFFICE

He storms past his SECRETARY

HARTMANN

Change of plans. Gonna head down this afternoon instead. Change my hotel booking. Any calls, put 'em through to my mobile.

INT/EXT. CAR TRAVELLING/COUNTRY HIGHWAY - AFTERNOON

Hartmann in his same city office clothes breaks all speed limits. Katherine's words reverberate, accompanied by the clicking of a keyboard.

KATHERINE (V.O.)

... and it has become apparent that your business interests are at odds with those of Tatiara Park ... In consideration of these circumstances, I therefore advise you I am severing all ties ...

INT. LOUNGE ROOM - EVENING

A vase with sprigs of wattle sits upon a polished timber pedestal. Hartmann rants and raves at Katherine seated in an old leather lounge chair.

HARTMANN

Severing all ties?

KATHERINE

That's correct, Mister Hartmann.

He moves menacingly toward her. She stands and confronts him.

KATHERINE

Although, it's not as if we had any formal arrangement, now, did we? Would seem you've made an extremely arduous trip just to have that confirmed. Unless of course you have other business down here.

Hartmann flinches at the comment.

HARTMANN

You know as well as I do it was
your father's wish --

She counters him and takes a step toward him. He backs off.

KATHERINE

We're talking my wishes now. You
may have had an arrangement with my
father but never with me.

She stares him down a moment, changes tack, walks past him,
back-footing him.

KATHERINE

How long have we been neighbours,
Raymond?

Hartmann is dumbstruck by this change of tack.

HARTMANN

I have a few parcels of land --

KATHERINE

Once part of Tatiara Park?

HARTMANN

Bought from your father. It's in
the books.

KATHERINE

So I eventually discovered. Sold to
you for a song.

HARTMANN

In recognition of my services.

KATHERINE

Your services?

He nods. She's not convinced.

KATHERINE

Raymond, you've never really shown
an interest in sheep before. So
what's the attraction of this land?
Wine maybe? Not alpacas, surely?

HARTMANN

That, young lady, is none of your
business.

KATHERINE

I think it is. For the record, I intend to get that land back.

OFF SCREEN, a heavy door OPENS then CLOSES.

HARTMANN

Then you will need to find a very good lawyer.

CORY (O.S.)

Shouldn't be too difficult.

Cory stands at the doorway, holds a small, wrapped gift.

CORY

I knocked. Heard the noise. Thought I'd better check.

HARTMANN

Oh, the young pretender?

Katherine is bemused.

HARTMANN

Ask this one about devious tactics to wrest this land from you.

Katherine laughs off this notion. Cory, however, is unmoved.

Hartmann cannot contain himself any longer, challenges Cory.

HARTMANN

Your mob think you have a god-given right to this land, don't you? Crying out for sympathy, handouts here, handouts there. Why the hell the old man let you back here is beyond me.

Cory, controlled, takes a single step into the room.

KATHERINE

What do you mean, your mob?

Cory remains stone-faced.

HARTMANN

Your prince charming here is probably, at this moment, planning his own Mabo deal.

KATHERINE

What are you on about?

Hartmann hesitates a moment. He looks directly at Cory and out of sheer spite, he continues.

HARTMANN

I suggest you ask your little native friend. Nunga, I believe the term is.

Katherine is at a loss. She looks firstly at Hartmann, then at Cory who raises his head proudly.

He has the appearance of a European.

KATHERINE

Don't be ridiculous. Look at his --

CORY

Don't judge a Nunga by the colour of the skin. It's the colour of the spirit that matters.

Katherine frowns, stares coldly at Cory.

KATHERINE

You could have just told me.

CORY

I am who I am.

Cory takes a single, deliberate step towards her.

CORY

However, I gather that's not the appropriate credential any more.

That said, he turns his back on them and exits with the gift.

Katherine stares vacantly at the doorway, queries Hartmann.

KATHERINE

What did you mean about my father letting him back here?

HARTMANN

I simply meant that he should have found out more about him before giving him a job here, that's all.

KATHERINE

So how come you know all this?

HARTMANN

It's my job to find out these things. In the interests of Tatiara Park, that's all.

His eyes wander aimlessly about the room.

HARTMANN

I just feel an obligation to your father's legacy. These people are becoming very powerful. Property owners all over the country ... they ... they're uncertain, and --

KATHERINE

There's a reason behind all this, isn't there Raymond? I know I'm not simply dealing with a scorned wannabe lover. A suitor whose missed out on the grand windfall.

Raymond is dumbstruck.

KATHERINE

Or could it be that you have lost your balls over me and you don't know how else to deal with it?

Embarrassed, Hartmann contrives a chuckle.

KATHERINE

One way or another, Raymond, you're going to end up sore and sorry.

Hartmann composes himself and glares menacingly at her.

But she is unswerving in her confrontation.

He makes a veiled challenge.

HARTMANN

Make sure you get a damned good lawyer.

And as he exits

HARTMANN

There's a lot you don't know about that mob.

The comment resonates with Katherine.

NOTE: The remainder of the story takes place over one day.

EXT. NARACORTE ART GALLERY MUSEUM - DAY - MORNING

The sandwich-board sign outside promotes an exhibition of aboriginal art: "2019 FIRST NATIONS - LAST DAYS"

INT. NARACORTE ART GALLERY MUSEUM - DAY - MORNING

On one side of the hall, TOURISTS/VISITORS casually inspect stalls with artifacts and craft items for sale.

Elsewhere, Katherine wanders the exhibition of indigenous art, display cabinets dedicated to local Potaruwutj culture, the traditional Dreaming.

On display, a mix of traditional and modern *objets d'art* from various First Nations.

Katherine goes to a display of journals, diaries and other records, neatly hand written, dated mid-Nineteenth Century.

A volunteer GUIDE sidles next to her.

KATHERINE

Didn't realize they were so literate.

GUIDE

Few white-fellas do. We kept our own records of the impact of European settlement, particularly with the arrival of the wool-growers.

Katherine is drawn to follow the Guide over to a display of early photographs: some of stately mansions and homesteads, including one of Tatiara Park; some depicting the early history of wool-growing in the district.

More mounted photographs - various prize stud rams.

GUIDE

They all seem so unnatural.

Katherine, views one photograph in particular.

KATHERINE

Yeah. You sometimes wonder what's underneath all the fluff.

GUIDE

Our most famous of all. Sir James.

KATHERINE

Any information?

VOLUNTEER

Not a lot. The Advocate's probably
your best bet.

INT. BORDER ADVOCATE OFFICE - DAY - MORNING

Provincial newspaper office, sparsely decorated, walls
adorned with tabloid teaser sheets about local issues.

At one desk, Paul Corbin plays with images on a computer.

Katherine at another desk. ZANE POLLOCK (40s), Journalist-
Editor, hands her a manilla folder.

Katherine removes some of the contents - a half a dozen or so
monochrome photographic negatives and a couple of prints.

POLLOCK

Can't vouch for their clarity.

Together they examine them.

POLLOCK

So, you're doing research for -- ?

KATHERINE

Breeding stock, yes. I'm still
relatively raw in this game.

Katherine holds a particular negative to the light:

THE VAGUE DEFINITION OF A RAM

KATHERINE

Like to get my hands on a beast
like this. Any chance of getting a
positive of this, blown up a bit?

POLLOCK

Shouldn't be any problem.

Pollock examines the negative.

POLLOCK

Incredible animal. I vaguely recall there's a bit of a story about that deal wasn't there? I wasn't around at the time.

Katherine shrugs, feigns ignorance.

Pollock views her suspiciously, his newspaper nose at work.

Katherine comes across a print:

B&W GROUP PIC (1987) - OLD TOM AND A NUMBER OF ASIAN MEN,
WITH ANOTHER YOUNGER CAUCASIAN MAN OUT OF FOCUS IN THE
IMMEDIATE BACKGROUND.

Katherine leans over to Pollock, points to man in question.

KATHERINE

Any idea who this is?

Pollock takes the photo, flips it over.

POLLOCK

Names should be on the back.

Katherine studies the reverse side. No names. Disappointed.

Pollock disguises his interest.

Katherine gathers the materials together into the folder.

KATHERINE

Look, thanks for that. Been most interesting.

POLLOCK

No problem. Yell out if you need more help with your ... research.

KATHERINE

No, that's fine, thanks. If you could email that copy for me, be appreciated.

POLLOCK

Shouldn't take long. Want to wait?

KATHERINE

No hurry.

POLLOCK

Maybe drop it over, personally?

KATHERINE
Bit of a drive.

Katherine smiles politely, turns and heads for the door.

KATHERINE
Tatiara Park.

POLLOCK
I'll find it.

Pollock watches her exit the office, turns his attention back to the manila folder, re-examines the negative of the ram.

He picks up and examines the other print that so intrigued Katherine.

He rummages further through the folder, eventually comes to a print stuck to the back of another:

2-SHOT PIC: OLD TOM AND THE YOUNGER CAUCASIAN MAN.

Pollock flips the photo and reads the notes.

POLLOCK
Vendor Thomas Spencer Esquire with
Raymond Hartmann, agent and broker.

He picks up the negative of the ram and takes it to Corbin.

POLLOCK
Reckon you could scan this. Get us
a couple of hi-res copies?

Corbin looks at the negative, nods in the affirmative.

POLLOCK
Ta.

He returns to his desk, wakes his computer, flips the two black and white photos, frisbee style, over to Corbin.

POLLOCK
And copies of these, too, while
you're at it.

He Googles a search, consults the screen, dials on his mobile, waits ... flips through the rest of the material in the folder ... comes across a newspaper clipping with:

PHOTO OF A CAR WRECK.

POLLOCK
(sotto voce)
Mister Richard Spencer...

The other party answers the phone.

POLLOCK
G'day. Stud Marino Breeders
Association?... Yeah, Zane Pollock,
Border Advocate in Naracoorte. I'm
doing a story on high profile rams.

EXT/INT. SUV VEHICLE - RURAL BACK ROAD - DAY

Wattle trees in full bloom.

Katherine's progress is blocked by a truck with a huge auger boring drill mounted on the back. Too wide to overtake.

The truck slows and turns into a newly-made dirt track.

Signage on the truck's door reads:

KEROGEN DEVELOPMENTS

The name seems to register with Katherine, but ...

She crawls past, peers after the vehicle blurred by raised dust.

EXT. HOMESTEAD - VERANDAH - DAY - LATER

Katherine, mounts the front steps, goes to the Front Door.

Sitting on the polished red-gum threshold, an envelope awaits her. Addressed simply to "Katherine" in a handsome hand.

She opens the envelope and reads:

THE LETTER

Written in the same hand on quality stock:

*"Dear Katherine, It is with regret
that I put pen to paper ..."*

KATHERINE

turns and sits on the top step to the verandah, her eyes not leaving the words on paper.

CORY (V.O.)

"... but I am compelled by circumstances to tender my resignation, effective immediately.

Katherine looks up a moment beyond the sheet of paper.

A small, older Japanese sedan drives up alongside the homestead.

Katherine resumes reading

CORY (V.O.)

"You said once, that there might be things about me you don't know, but ought to. Obviously what you have learnt does not sit well with you. Should you find out more, let me know, for I am as ignorant as you. I left Tatiara Park as a young lad, innocent of the ways of white-fellas. I returned not to lay claim to it but to find my place in it. I am little the wiser ..."

The letter goes limp in her hand.

CORY (V.O.)

*"... and so shall return to that place of special significance and start my journey anew.
PS. Hopefully I passed muster"*

Audrey exits the sedan with a bag of groceries and the mail, ambles around to the verandah, sees Katherine's vacant look.

Katherine stands, hands the letter to Audrey.

Audrey starts to read the letter, doesn't get very far. Face drawn, she folds it, hands it back to Katherine.

KATHERINE

I remember, now.

Katherine shoves the letter in her back pocket, moves off past her own vehicle, and heads toward the stables.

EXT. SHEARING SHED - DAY

Katherine dismounts Charlie, mopes around the shed. She tries the main door. It's locked. She looks through one of the few, dusty windows.

INT. SHEARING SHED - DAY - FLASHBACK

CIRCA MID 1980s:

SHEARERS, mostly male, totally focussed, tackle the mob.

YOUNG KATHERINE (about 6 years old) plays hide'n'seek with her brother YOUNG RICHARD (about 12 years old) among the bales of wool at one end of the building.

She finds a hiding spot, out of sight of her brother, sits there quietly as he wanders about.

YOUNG RICHARD

Coming ready or not. I know where
you are.

Through a small gap in the bales appears a YOUNG LAD (about 8 years old), with an olive complexion.

The Young Lad smiles a blushing smile.

He is joined by an adult male, a half cast Aboriginal, who beckons the Young Lad depart the scene.

Reluctantly but obediently, the Young Lad complies.

Young Katherine sits in her hiding spot, eyes the Young Lad who looks back at her - a connection.

She is jolted by a slap on the wrist by Richard.

YOUNG RICHARD

It.

She looks back for a last glimpse of the Young Lad ... in vain. He has gone.

END FLASHBACK

EXT/INT. MANAGER'S HOUSE - DAY

Katherine knocks on the front door. No answer. She tests the handle. It opens, she enters.

MAIN ROOM - CONTINUOUS

On the floor, a number of unsealed cartons filled with books.

Katherine takes a cursory look, mostly legal tomes.

She moves across the Hallway to another room

BEDROOM - CONTINUOUS

The bed is made, the room is spotless and tidy; and bare of any accoutrements.

She pulls the door closed, returns to

MAIN ROOM - CONTINUOUS

She's drawn to the ram's skull resting on the mantelpiece below the shotgun mounted on the chimney.

She removes it, grasps one of the spiral horns, intrigued by:

A BRAND - "TIT - SRJ" BURNED INTO IT.

She replaces the skull, a final survey of the room, departs.

INT. HOMESTEAD - DAY

HALLWAY

Katherine enters the front door of the homestead, walks along the hallway toward the stairs, past the console table.

There lies Cory's neatly wrapped gift alongside the mail.

Bemused, she picks up the gift, removes the wrapping. A small, plain cardboard package. Inside are the two shot glasses from Cory's house ... and a small hand-made card:

'Hopefully I passed muster'

She removes one of the glasses and gives it a delicate flick with her index finger. The PING of superior crystal. She takes the gift along the Hallway to

LOUNGE ROOM - CONTINUOUS

Katherine takes the glasses to a crystal decanter of port wine on a salver on a sideboard.

Her face contorts. She turns toward the fire-place, raises one of the glasses in a throwing motion ...

The TOOT of a car horn interrupts.

Deflated, she replaces the glass on the salver.

INT. STUDY - DAY

AN ENLARGED BLACK AND WHITE PRINT:

The head of a regal looking ram. A marking, like a burnt-in branding, is evident on one of the spiral horns.

This photo drops, reveals

ANOTHER ENLARGED BLACK AND WHITE PRINT

Old Tom and the Asian men - with a Younger Hartmann in the immediate background.

This photo, too, drops, reveals

A THIRD ENLARGED PHOTO

Two-shot Old Tom and the Younger Hartmann.

POLLOCK (O.S.)

Your father with a bloke named
Raymond Hartmann. You know the man?

Katherine at the desk nods her head, drops the third photo.

Pollock, buttocks against the desk, nurses a generous glass of port wine.

POLLOCK

Apparently he did the legals for a deal between your father and some Commie investors back in the late nineteen eighties. Before the animal went to auction. Convinced them to pay a lot of money for your father's ram. Called, er -- ?

KATHERINE

Sir James.

She picks up the photo of the regal ram - Sir James.

POLLOCK

That's right. Seems the chinks had invested in a property up in the mid-north, Wilmington or thereabouts, where Sir James was meant to do wonders.

Katherine focusses on the photo, perplexed.

POLLOCK
But he didn't rise to the occasion.
So to speak.

KATHERINE
So to speak.

POLLOCK
So they cut their losses, and their
embarrassment, sold out and
presumably headed home.

Pollock looks toward Katherine for a response. None.

POLLOCK
As for the animal, no records of
where it went. Makes you wonder.

KATHERINE
You're pretty suspicious.

POLLOCK
Newspaper man. Not hard to smell a
story. I mean, apart from research,
maybe there's another reason you
want the photos?

Katherine smiles non-convincingly.

KATHERINE
Sentimental.

POLLOCK
Looks like a lot of sentiment.

He smiles most convincingly, skols the port, deposits the
glass on the desk, heads for the door.

THE HALLWAY - CONTINUOUS

Pollock exits the Study, causes Audrey, feather duster in
hand, to step back from the doorway.

A polite nod, he makes his way to the front door.

Katherine, with the photo of the ram, exits the Study.

AUDREY
(off photo)
You going to buy that one too?

KATHERINE

This one's long dead. Least I
presume so. Although its legacy
seems to live on.

Beyond the Front Door, Pollock's car drives off with a TOOT.

AUDREY

Is that why he was here?

KATHERINE

From the newspaper. Helping me
research the history of this place.

Audrey moves off along the Hallway toward the kitchen.

Katherine fondles the photograph and withdraws to the Study.

PRE-LAP:

PHONE DIAL TONE.

INT. POLLOCK'S CAR TRAVELLING - COUNTRY HIGHWAY - DAY

Pollock drives one-handed, a broad, smug smile, waits for his
hands-free phone call to be answered.

INT. CITY EDITOR'S OFFICE - DAY

The editor, DICK CHRUGHTON (60s), in his glass cell of an
office, snatches up his ringing desk phone.

CHRUGHTON

Yeah?

(listens impatiently)

... better be a biggie ...

(even more impatient)

...vaguely remember. Yeah, yeah.

Lawyer here in town. Licks a few
arses at the Old Boys' Club... Bit
of a Bondie, Skase type...

(less impatient now)

... What d'you mean lucrative?

POLLOCK'S CAR/EDITOR'S OFFICE - INTERCUT

POLLOCK

I mean, like a world record price.

CHRIGHTON
So what's the issue?

POLLOCK
Turns out the animal was a dud. And the Chinese buyers weren't happy. Christ knows what happened to them when Beijing called them home.

CHRIGHTON
So much for old news. What's the new news?

POLLOCK
Well, the daughter of the late vendor seems to be showing an inordinate interest, thirty odd years after the event. And I doubt if it's just sentimental.

CHRIGHTON
Then you'd better find out why.

POLLOCK
I'm on to it. Oh, and I might have another exclusive for you.

Pollock terminates the call.

END INTERCUT

INT. POLLOCK'S CAR TRAVELLING - COUNTRY HIGHWAY - DAY

Pollock's smug smile slowly gives way to a look of near euphoria.

His attention on the media display on the dash, he clicks on his phone again, scrolls down contacts ...

A succession of three huge trucks, with the KEROGEN DEVELOPMENT signage, laden with construction equipment gushes past in the other direction.

Pollock grips the steering wheel, fights the vortex, pulls to a stop on the side of the road, regains composure, looks in the wing mirror at the receding trucks, makes his call.

INT. HOTEL DINING ROOM - DAY

At a table, Purcell and a few LANDHOLDERS hover around the seated Hartmann, all eyes on his phone.

HARTMANN

These lots I'm going to broker for you blokes are from an award-winning stud up in New South Wales. They've been around for yonks and have a list of credentials as long as a giraffe's neck.

He swipes his finger down the large screen.

Their scrutiny is interrupted when the phone tingles - an incoming call. Hartmann feigns apology, stands moves away from the others.

HARTMANN

Never know.

He answers, not caring to check the caller ID.

HARTMANN

Yes this is he. Good, good. What seems to be your problem?

His face turns sour.

HARTMANN

Yes, I know the young lady ... and what about Sir James?

He listens intently ... slowly drops the phone from his ear.

PURCELL

Bad news?

HARTMANN

I'll be back. Meanwhile, read through those contracts. Any questions, text me.

And he's off in a flash.

INT. POLLOCK'S CAR - DAY

Pollock scrolls down on the media display for a new contact. Selects a number. Calls.

His call is answered.

CORBIN (V.O.)

Boss.

POLLOCK

Listen, I'm gonna be gone for a while. I'm gonna check out some interesting machinery. See what else you can dig up on this Hartmann character. A.S.A.P.

He hangs up.

A check of the rear vision mirror for traffic. He pulls from the verge, does a rapid U-turn and speeds off.

INT. STUDY - DAY

Katherine stares mesmerized by the image of Sir James on the desk. She picks up the photo of Old Tom and Hartmann.

Furrows appear on her forehead.

INT. KITCHEN - DAY

Audrey wipes down the bench top.

KATHERINE (O.S.)

Sir James. What do you reckon?

Startled, Audrey avoids eye contact.

AUDREY

History now, isn't it?

KATHERINE

Is it? Word has it there's a story attached.

AUDREY

The only one who can answer that has gone to his grave.

The comment irks Katherine.

INT. OLD TOM'S BEDROOM - DAY

Katherine stands at the doorway, hesitant.

She moves furtively around the room, picks up the filigree photo frame, places a finger-tip kiss upon it, replaces it.

She opens the drawer of the what-not, rummages, picks up a set of rosary beads, deftly works her way along them.

She replaces the beads on top of a well-worn Bible, looks absently about the room.

She's drawn to a large camphor chest tucked away beside the huge walnut wardrobe. She tries the lock. It is secured.

She returns to the drawer of the what-not, a brief search, locates a small set of keys.

A key fits and, with a bit of jiggling, the lock is removed.

Hesitant, she lifts the lid.

Startled, she gasps at the sight.

Gripping the spiral horns, she removes a ghostly white skull of a long deceased ram, holds it at arms' length.

She slowly turns the skull around to get a full appraisal.

There is a brand burnt into the back of one of the horns:

"TAT-SRJ"

INT. HOMESTEAD KITCHEN - DAY

Audrey, at the bench, wipes down a huge cutting board, a large carving knife and collection of vegetables alongside.

KATHERINE (O.S.)

I don't know why, but I sense this
is quite a bit of history.

Audrey turns, freezes.

Katherine at the door holds the ram's skull.

AUDREY

Looks like an old --

KATHERINE

Yes, exactly. Not the type of thing
you'd expect to find hidden in
someone's bedroom.

She gives the skull serious inspection.

KATHERINE

(refers to brand)

I'm not sure about all this. I
presume it had some sort of
significance for the old man.

She shows the brand to Audrey.

AUDREY

Put it on all the sheep, didn't
they? Probably just one of hundreds
of skulls lying around.

Audrey inadvertently knocks the knife to the floor.

Katherine notes this.

KATHERINE

Not like this one. Maybe one other.

EXT. MANAGER'S HOUSE - DAY

A short distance behind the house, Cory heads into the scrub carrying a ram's skull, and a spade.

INT. STUDY - DAY

With her ram skull alongside on the desk, Katherine scans an old ledger book - runs her finger briskly down the entries on a number of pages. Nothing of interest. She closes it.

On its cover is a label: 'PURCHASES 1980-90'

From beneath it she pulls another ledger: 'SALES 1980-90'

She runs a finger down a page. Flicks over another page.

Each entry has various combinations of letters - a reference index - each begins with TAT.

She flicks another page and comes across the entry for the sale of Sir James and the combination of letters: 'TIT-SRJ'.

She glances at the "TAT-SRJ" brand on the ram's skull.

KATHERINE

Tit for Tat.

She storms from the Study.

EXT/INT. MANAGER'S HOUSE - DAY

Katherine dismounts Charlie, knocks forcefully once on the front door. There is no answer. She enters the unlocked door.

MAIN ROOM - CONTINUOUS

The floor is covered with cartons of varying sizes sealed with tape.

Katherine goes straight to the fireplace.

The shotgun is still mounted on the chimney, but the mantle-piece is bare.

She quickly exits, moves into

CORY'S BEDROOM

A suitcase sits atop the neatly made bed.

Katherine goes to the wardrobe. Empty. She goes through the chest of drawers. Empty. She returns to

MAIN ROOM

Katherine goes haphazardly from carton to carton.

She wrenches the sealing tape from one of the larger ones and opens it. Books.

She goes to another carton. Again only books.

She's at a loss ... then it registers, she promptly removes Cory's letter from her back pocket, reads

CORY (V.O.)
*"I shall return to that place of
special significance and start my
journey anew."*

EXT. MANAGER'S HOUSE - DAY

Katherine hurries from the cottage, goes to a frisky Charlie, has difficulty mounting. She focusses and trots off.

EXT. FIELD - DAY

In the middle of the field, far from any roads, a structure that looks like a rocket launch pad.

EXT. RURAL BACK ROAD - DAY

The scarred trunk of the mallee tree, the site of Old Tom's accident.

Pollock, on the bonnet of his parked car, takes photos on his smart phone through the roadside foliage.

He swipes through the images on the screen, ruminates.

He hops off the bonnet, enters the vehicle, drives off.

INT. HOMESTEAD KITCHEN - DAY

The wall-phone RINGS ... and RINGS ...

Audrey places the carving knife on the bench top beside diced vegetables and huge stock pot, moves tentatively to answer.

AUDREY

Tatiara Park.

On hearing the caller's voice, she starts, stutters.

AUDREY

No, she's not in. No, I don't know!... I don't want... Look, you should know, you're not welcome around here anymore ... All I know is that he's tendered his resignation and ... I told you, you're not welcome anymore ...

She abruptly hangs up, in a quandary.

INT. 4-WD - TRAVELLING - COUNTRY HIGHWAY - DAY

A smart phone flops on to the passenger seat. The vehicle accelerates.

INT/EXT. CAR TRAVELLING - COUNTRY HIGHWAY - DAY

Pollock's car cruises the highway. It's been a long day.

A 4-WD vehicle approaches at breakneck speed in the opposite direction.

Pollock strains to see the identity of the driver as it flashes past, catches only the "KEROGEN DEVELOPMENTS" signage on the door.

He continues on his way, takes a final, bemused look back in his rear vision mirror at the rapidly disappearing vehicle.

INT. BORDER ADVOCATE OFFICE - DAY - AFTERNOON

Pollock uploads the photos from his phone to his desk computer.

COMPUTER SCREEN

VARIOUS IMAGES OF TRUCKS AND OTHER PLANT ASSEMBLED NEAR A RIG IN A COMPOUND OFF IN THE DISTANCE

The Office ASSISTANT bids farewell for the day.

Pollock calls back over his shoulder to Corbin still at his desk, about to open a stubby of beer.

POLLOCK
What d'you make of all this?

Corbin obliges and goes to Pollock's desk, examines the photos as they are scrolled through.

CORBIN
We sending up satellites? Hard to see through the trees.

POLLOCK
There haven't been any big announcements.

CORBIN
Not that I know of.

He wanders back to his desk, leaves Pollock to speculate.

POLLOCK
You get anymore for me on Hartmann?

CORBIN
Not a lot. Except that he's tied up with some sort of exploration mob. Something or other Developments --

POLLOCK
Kerogen?

CORBIN
Sounds right. Weird name.

Pollock stares at the screen.

POLLOCK
I've got a feeling I just saw him
out on the highway, in a hurry.

He leans back, rubs his neck, his mind ticking over.

INT. HOMESTEAD KITCHEN - DAY - AFTERNOON

A distraught Audrey nurses a cup of tea at the table, the vegetable cutting put on hold.

EXT. HOMESTEAD - DAY - AFTERNOON

The "KEROGEN DEVELOPMENTS" 4-WD screeches to a halt in the gravel in front of the homestead.

INT. HOMESTEAD KITCHEN - SAME

A look of dread on Audrey's face. She rushes to the wall-mounted phone and dials.

A nervous wait before the call is answered.

AUDREY
Brian?

INT/EXT. POLICE PANEL VAN - DAY - AFTERNOON

The SERGEANT at the wheel, with passenger Father Jameson, guns the vehicle, lights flashing, through the main street of Naracoorte.

INT/EXT. BORDER ADVOCATE OFFICE - SAME

Corbin at the window facing the street, sips a beer.

CORBIN
Christ. He's certainly in a hurry!

Pollock looks up from the computer screen.

POLLOCK
What's that?

CORBIN
Cops. With a Priest in custody.

Pollock moves swiftly to the window.

CORBIN
Whadda ya reckon. Young choir boys?

But Pollock is gone.

EXT. SCRUBLAND - DAY - AFTERNOON

Katherine on Charlie trots in amongst the wattle trees, checks the surroundings, gets her bearings.

INT/EXT. CAR TRAVELLING - DAY - AFTERNOON

Pollock speeds along the country highway, the Police van, lights flashing, a short distance ahead of him.

EXT. CAVERN - DAY - AFTERNOON

Katherine at the entrance to the cavern dismounts from a spooked Charlie.

INT. CAVERN - DAY - AFTERNOON

With the aid of her phone light, Katherine treads cautiously, comes to the spent ashes of the camp-fire.

A soft SHUFFLING sound. She turns.

Cory seated on a small mound a few metres away.

Katherine's eyes brighten. She hesitates, approaches, douses her phone light, sits beside him in the minimal light.

He averts his eyes.

KATHERINE
A place of special significance?

No response.

KATHERINE
I thought we were making plans for
the Park? Big mistake, eh?
(...pause...)
I went to the cottage...

She glares at him.

KATHERINE
... looking for something ...

He stands, walks a few paces from her, his back to her.

KATHERINE

Thought I might find your souvenir with the curly horns. Very similar to another one I just found. In the old man's room. I know people collect them. But I suspect it's a bit more than that.

CORY

It's gone. For good.

KATHERINE

Why?

Now he turns to confront her.

CORY

Bad spirit.

KATHERINE

Enlighten me.

He moves to a flattened stalagmite and sits.

She, the Inquisitor, stands up before him, the Confessor.

CORY

I was only a lad when we packed up and moved to the mid-north, up near Wilmington.

KATHERINE

(knowingly)
Wilmington.

CORY

Dad had a job with the Chinese owners of a new stud. But they closed up shop after a few years and left. We stayed around until I was out of high school because he was making good money. Even though he only ever worked odd jobs.

KATHERINE

And your mother?

CORY

She died a year after we moved. She was frowned upon. Because of me.

Katherine looks for enlightenment.

CORY

Willed it. Shame job. Wrong colour.
You know how it is.

Katherine shakes her head ever so subtly, not in denial but in empathy.

CORY

She had a sister somewhere around here but I never met her.

KATHERINE

(sotto)

An auntie?

CORY

Then, just like that, soon as I turned eighteen, Dad disappeared from the face of the earth. I had no-one, so I moved to Adelaide. Managed to get into uni part-time.

KATHERINE

Law?

An affirmative nod.

CORY

Packing up, I came across a carton with my name on it. Had some books, baby clothes, a sheep's skull. And a letter saying I should return to Tatiara Park, the country where I belonged. That I'd know when the time was right.

KATHERINE

Your good reference ... But why your dad's sudden departure?

CORY

Not entirely sure. Police said he'd upped and gone walkabout. Can you believe that? In this day and age.

Katherine is all ears.

CORY

But rumour had it he was a witness to something he shouldn't have been. Back in the eighties. To do with a ram. Hence the skull, maybe?

She moves closer toward him.

KATHERINE
Sir James?

CORY
There was an indiscretion,
apparently.

KATHERINE
Whose, I wonder?

Suddenly a beam of light plays upon her face.

They shield their eyes, turn to the source of the light, a
mobile phone ... and the dull profile of a pistol.

HARTMANN
Wonder no more.

KATHERINE
Hart - How did you --?

HARTMANN
Dear little Audrey. She was quite
cut up about it all. Assured her
this'd be just our little secret.

Katherine shields her eyes, stands, takes a step forward.

Hartmann steadies the gun.

HARTMANN
Tsch, tsch. Should've stayed in
Melbourne, my dear, instead of
coming here playing detective.
Never would take your old man's
advice, would you, girlie.

Cory sidles alongside Katherine. He shields his eyes from the
light, grips her hand.

She in turn moves a further half step forward, confronts
Hartmann.

KATHERINE
So, tell me ... about this
indiscretion.

HARTMANN
Which one? With the Purcell tart?
Nah, child's play that one.

KATHERINE
You really are scum.

HARTMANN

Try Sir James. He may have been sold but it turned out he was so fond of this place he decided he wanted to stay. Well, who are we mere mortals to argue with the wishes of the world's most regal ram, I ask you?

KATHERINE

So you sent another instead?

HARTMANN

A simple case of --

KATHERINE

-- Tit for Tat.

HARTMANN

Got it in one. Let's face it. To most people they all look the same, especially the chinks. Couldn't tell one gene from another back then.

CORY

But I gather my father was privy to your scam?

HARTMANN

Our scam. It really wasn't all that hard to convince Old Tom.

KATHERINE

No way. He may have been a prick but --

HARTMANN

Oh, that he certainly was. But that's ancient history now.

He shines his light about the cavern, at the various stalactites and stalagmites.

HARTMANN

You know, this could make a nice little tourist attraction, if my little venture doesn't deliver. Which it will, believe me.

KATHERINE

This much I believe. You won't be getting your grubby little hands on any more of this land.

Cory looks for elaboration.

KATHERINE

He's been acquiring little bits of Tatiara Park, here and there under everyone's noses. Under the guise of so-called Kerogen Developments.

HARTMANN

Well, well, well. We have been playing detective, haven't we?

KATHERINE

Do you really think the fibre from those other animals will give you a better return?

HARTMANN

I'll leave those other animals to saps like Purcell who'll soon go broke and sell to me at bargain basement prices.

His captives are bemused.

HARTMANN

Your dumb sheep are grazing on land that offers something much more valuable, especially to the politicians. They couldn't give a fuck about running out of wool. They're worried about running out of oil. 'Cos we all know most of them still have a stake in it, and twenty-fifty is a long way off. This place here is sitting on top of one massive seam of Kerogen.

Means nothing to his two hostages.

HARTMANN

Shale. All saturated with the stuff that makes good old oil, and I aim to own the lot, one way or another.

KATHERINE

(to Cory)

The last little parcel went into his name only a week before the old man died. I'm suspecting blackmail here. But why? There's more to it than just the ram.

HARTMANN

Yes. And wouldn't you like to know?
But now that you two are here
together ... I didn't really want
it to come to this but --

Cory takes a step forward. Hartmann brandishes his weapon more menacingly, stops him in his tracks.

HARTMANN

My, we are brave aren't we? But
like your old man, stupid. Never
did see him again, did you?

CORY

What do you know about --?

HARTMANN

A victim of ... misadventure, I
think they call it. He got greedy,
didn't he? Wasn't content with his
compensation payout for Old Tom's
various indiscretions, was he?

KATHERINE

What do you mean, Old Tom's var--?

HARTMANN

Various Indiscretions? Oh yes, the
old bugger had a catalogue of them.
Old Tom by name, an Old Tom by
nature.

Cory makes another move forward but Katherine restrains him.

HARTMANN

(addresses Katherine)

So you see, young lady. You give me
no choice. Time for another
misadventure. They'll simply assume
you learnt the truth about him.

(indicates Cory)

Put it down to a case of lovers'
tiff gone wrong if they ever
find you.

Hartmann aims. Katherine rugby tackles Cory back to the safety of a rocky outcrop.

Hartmann fires. The recoil unbalances him.

They retreat further into the cavern, into the darkness, behind a clump of fallen stalactites.

Hartmann ventures tentatively after them, past his unseen prey, into the dark.

Cory and Katherine double back, steal away toward the cavern opening. Cory slips, almost tumbles into a deep breach.

Katherine grabs his hand, assists him to his feet.

Hartmann turns toward the commotion, fires repeatedly.

Katherine picks up an unburned log from the remains of the camp-fire, tosses it and strikes Hartmann on the head.

He slips and tumbles with a THUD and a mournful GROAN.

SILENCE...

Katherine and Cory tread cautiously back toward Hartmann.

Illuminated by his own phone beside him, he appears impaled on a stalagmite.

He stirs, picks up his phone and again captures his prey in its beam. He retrieves his pistol, fires in their direction.

The shots ricochet off stalagmites and stalactites.

Katherine issues a muffled YELP, places a hand to her neck.

KATHERINE

It's cool. Just a nick.

The weapon clicks repeatedly - no more rounds.

Katherine and Cory make good their escape.

Hartmann yells abuse.

HARTMANN

Don't think it's over. I'm writing this chapter. You hear me!

EXT. CAVERN - DAY - LATE AFTERNOON

Cory and Katherine flee the cave.

They rush over to Hartmann's 4-WD, look inside for the keys. No luck.

Cory lifts the bonnet, stands confused by the layout.

Katherine does a quick reconnaissance of the surroundings.

KATHERINE
Must have wandered off when
Hartmann arrived.

CORY
Who, what?

KATHERINE
Charlie - couldn't have strayed too
far.

She goes in search.

Cory frantically fiddles around under the bonnet.

He looks up from his endeavour.

Hartmann, blackened forehead, hand on his wounded side,
staggers from the cave.

Cory backs away, looks for an escape route.

Katherine on her mount approaches, yells.

KATHERINE
There's room for two.

Cory runs toward Katherine. She offers a hand, and, cowboy
style, he mounts the horse behind her and they gallop away.

Cory grabs for his little leather phone holster. Empty.

CORY
Damn. Lost my phone.

KATHERINE
No reception, remember?

CORY
Touché.

Hartmann gets to his 4-WD, slams the bonnet shut, struggles
inside, starts off after his prey.

INT. 4-WD - TRAVELLING - DAY - LATE AFTERNOON

Hartmann drives recklessly, manages to remove a few extra
rounds from the glove box, reloads his pistol.

EXT. SCRUBLAND - DAY

Katherine, encumbered with the extra load, rides expertly through bushland that proves difficult for even Hartmann in the sturdy 4-WD to negotiate at speed.

Hartmann fires his pistol sporadically.

The 4-WD almost loses it on a sandy mound ... the wheels spin ... and spin ... but eventually the tyres grip.

The vehicle manoeuvres slowly among the wattle and mallee interspersed with taller eucalypts, no prey in sight.

Hidden in a patch of dense scrub, Katherine and Cory take a breather, their mount near exhaustion.

Convinced all is safe, they venture out slowly, stop dead in their tracks, confronted by the 4-WD lurking ahead.

KATHERINE

This is it.

Katherine digs her heels in, Charlie responds, Cory holds firmly.

Immediately, the 4-WD accelerates.

CORY

(yells, gestures)
Over there, the creek.

KATHERINE

What creek?

Cory reaches forward and pulls on one of the reins and they head toward a depression in the landscape, into a semi-dry creek bed, flanked by more robust gums.

Hartmann's 4-WD pulls up on the ridge above the creek-bed, watches his prey escape. He slaps the vehicle into reverse, speeds off at a tangent, disappears in a cloud of dust.

EXT. SHEARERS' QUARTERS - DAY - LATE AFTERNOON

Katherine and Cory a few hundred metres from the Shearers' Quarters. The horse sweats profusely, totally exhausted.

CORY

The house. There's a 'phone.

The 4-WD thunders, approaches on their flank.

KATHERINE

And a shotgun.

They veer towards the Manager's house ... but Hartmann cuts them off.

CORY

Bastard.

Cory slips off the rump of the horse, yells

CORY

Make a dash to the homestead, he can't be in two places.

Cory sprints toward the Shearers' Quarters.

Katherine looks back.

Hartmann in his 4-WD pursues Cory.

Katherine quickly alights, allows the horse to trot off by itself.

She scrambles to Cory. They join hands and make their way to the entrance to the building. Padlocked.

Cory's solid boot soon has it open.

INT. SHEARERS' QUARTERS - CONTINUOUS

They enter the central Common Room ... a table, a few dusty chairs. Cory slides the inside bolt and secures the door behind them.

Katherine dabs a tissue on the minor neck wound.

KATHERINE

Now what?

CORY

Good question.

Against the back wall of the room, a pot-belly fire box and a rudimentary iron poker, lightweight, not very impressive.

Cory picks it up and takes it to the doorway, Katherine follows.

A shot SPLINTERS through the wooden doorway.

HARTMANN (O.S.)
Hope there's still some tucker
lying around in there. I've got all
day. And night.

Another shot splinters through the door.

CORY
(flippant)
He has a point. The back door?

Together they slip across to the back door, to one side of the fire-box, try the bolt. It's bent slightly, difficult to slide. Cory slams it with the fire-poker. It gives.

EXT. SHEARERS' QUARTERS - CONTINUOUS

Hartmann peers through the dusty glass of one of the verandah windows. Nothing.

He moves further along to another, peers through, sees the open back door in the opposite wall - in the distance, Katherine and Cory make good their escape.

EXT. SHEARING SHED - CONTINUOUS

Katherine and Cory race towards the corrugated iron building.

CORY
Locked, if I remember.

KATHERINE
Last time I tried.

A SHOT - a bullet zings into the ground by their feet.

Cory veers Katherine off in another direction, to the far side of the building.

They slither underneath the building, through the cobwebs, between the matrix of squat stilts.

Cory probes around above his head, locates a couple of short lengths of loose floorboards.

CORY
This was my playground when I was a
kid, remember?

He forces up the loose boards and they clamber inside.

INT. SHEARING SHED - CONTINUOUS

In the dimness, Cory and Katherine replace the floorboards.

Against the rear wall, a tall, wide sliding, corrugate iron door. To its side, wool bales, some stacked three high.

Cory tries to drag one of the bales toward the loose floor boards.

CORY

Just in case.

It is no easy task. Katherine assists and they topple the bale to secure the boards.

SILENCE ... they gather their wits.

CORY

Do you think you can make it to the house? I'll take care of him.

KATHERINE

We'll take care of him.

No time for arguing.

Katherine surveys the place.

KATHERINE

Maybe the loading bay?

CORY

If I can get his attention.

Cory stomps heavily on the floor boards in the opposite direction.

Katherine tip-toes toward the sliding door. A control unit on the end of a power cable dangles from a rafter above.

Katherine presses the button. Damn. No power.

The glass in one of the few windows shatters. A shot grazes Katherine's wrist, foils her attempt to slide open the door more than a few inches.

Another shot. Cory collapses, struck in the upper abdomen.

Katherine rushes to his aid. He still breathes ... just.

Blood seeps from his wound ... And slowly from his mouth.

KATHERINE

Bastard.

CORY
(choking)
The house ...

Another shot zings past them, thuds into a bale.

Katherine appraises the situation. Despite her own minor wound, she drags Cory to a nook between some of the bales at floor level, big enough and dim enough to conceal a man.

With effort, she rips a sleeve off her shirt, forms a wad and rams it into Cory's wound.

KATHERINE
(whispers)
Leave it with me.
(looks about her)
When I was a little girl --

CORY
You played hide'n'seek ... with
Richard.

Katherine appraises him tenderly ... and he her. She goes to a vantage point, peers through a slight gap in the bales.

BASHING on the door adjacent to the broken window. A shot is fired through the door ... and another loosens the lock.

The gun CLICKS, CLICKS and CLICKS again ...

SILENCE ...

Hartmann kicks open the door, throws the gun away, cases the facility.

He moves to the memorabilia wall, removes the ancient pair of hand shears, goes in search.

Katherine quietly slips back behind the bales, looks towards the open doorway.

Hartmann now stands between the bales and the door.

Katherine, out of sight, furtively scales the bales, stacked three high.

She peers over the bales for a glimpse of Hartmann.

He spies her.

Hampered by his injury, with shears in hand, Hartmann climbs up after her as best he can.

HARTMANN

(breathless)

Shoulda known better than to come
messin' in secret men's business
... In case you haven't worked it
out ... your Mister Hamilton ...

Katherine squeezes between the bale Hartmann is climbing and the one behind her. With all her might, she heaves against the front bale, dislodges it.

HARTMANN

... is more than he appears --

Hartmann loses his balance.

With the shears in one hand he grabs desperately at the teetering bale with the other.

With its centre of gravity out of kilter, the 160 kilogram bale tumbles toward the floor, pins Hartmann underneath.

His legs kick frantically, quiver, stop dead.

Katherine clamors from the stack of bales, jumps to the floor.

Hartmann lays motionless, blood seeps from under the bale, gathers in globules on the lanolin preserved floorboards.

Sore from her own jarred landing, Katherine staggers up to the bale.

Hartmann lies face down, his torso pinned beneath the bale, the body void of life.

Katherine struggles with all her might to roll the bale over.

She turns Hartmann's body over. His chest is impaled by the shears, still firmly in his grasp.

On the verge of retching, she mutters

KATHERINE

Dangerous in the wrong hands.

A GUTTURAL COUGH from Cory.

She rushes back to Cory, eases him out on to the floor, cradles his head on her lap.

KATHERINE

You never did join in, did you?

CORY
(final gasp)
You seemed happy enough with your
brother ...

She leans down and kisses his forehead. She remains stoic.

EXT. SHEARING SHED - DUSK

Katherine, struggles to carry Cory's leaden body from the building, heads towards his house.

Two vehicles approach like contenders in the Dakar rally.

The lead car screeches to a halt. Pollock quickly alights, rushes through the dust to Katherine.

POLLOCK
Heard the shots. Turned out to be a
real biggie, I see.

Katherine looks to Pollock's car. She has more concern for one of his two passengers, Audrey, her face badly bruised, being supported by Father Jameson.

KATHERINE
He won't ever do that again.

The Police van screeches to a halt. The SERGEANT rushes to the scene.

Katherine nods in the direction of the Shearing Shed.

The Sergeant draws his weapon.

KATHERINE
Too late for that.

Never-the-less, he officiously heads off to the building.

Pollock follows, records events on his smart phone.

Katherine drops to her knees, cradles Cory's head in her lap.

Audrey, supported by an awkward Father Jameson, approaches the casualties, shakes her head in commiseration.

AUDREY
Cory, sweet boy.

She shrugs herself free from the Priest's embrace.

KATHERINE
We had plans.

AUDREY
Probably for the best.

KATHERINE
For the best?

Audrey is reluctant to respond - but the can has been opened.

AUDREY
It would never have worked. Could
never have worked.

Audrey looks at Pollock returning from the shearing shed,
turns and whispers something in the Priest's ear. He shakes
his head.

Katherine looks from one to the other.

FR JAMESON
I can't. I promised the old man.

AUDREY
The old man's dead, for Christ's
sake.

FR JAMESON
I tried to warn her.

AUDREY
Did you tell her outright?

FR JAMESON
I've taken vows, Audrey. Holy vows.

AUDREY
(looks to Cory)
They mean nothing to him.

The Priest stands mute.

KATHERINE
What?

AUDREY
(to Fr Jameson)
I'm not asking the priest. I'm
asking you. Tell her, Brian --

KATHERINE
Tell me what?

AUDREY
-- or I will.

Father Jameson falters ... then addresses Katherine as if his whole world was about to fall apart.

FR JAMESON
Cory ... Cory was ...

KATHERINE
Aboriginal?

The Priest struggles for more words ...

AUDREY
Was your father's son.

Pollock, directing his phone at the scene before him, repeats

POLLOCK
... her father's son ...

Shock sets in.

Audrey sinks painfully to her knees alongside Katherine and Cory.

AUDREY
After Richard was born your mother experienced, shall we say, difficulties. Your father would not be denied. There were a number of indiscretions --

Katherine mouths "... a number ..."

AUDREY
One with Cory's mother. She told me all. How he took her to the cave. I gave your father an ultimatum. If he didn't confess, I'd tell ... He confessed.

(looks to Fr Jameson)
And then it was out of my hands and into those of God.

Katherine comforts Cory's leaden head closer to her chest.

Audrey stands, adds a coda:

AUDREY
As fate would have it, a few years later --

KATHERINE

Me?

AUDREY

Your mother's daughter.

Pollock continues his recording ...

And in the golden light of the Magic Hour, the last of Cory's blood weeps from his mouth, mixes with that from Katherine's injured wrist that cradles his head, and drops to soak the soil below.

INT. POLLOCK'S CAR - DUSK

With the sun low on the horizon, Pollock interviews Audrey with his smart phone.

AUDREY

Hartmann knew it wasn't Sammy's child because of a work accident that had made him infertile. He knew of this because Hartmann Senior handled the compensation. Hartmann Junior put two and two together. Had Thomas over a barrel.

POLLOCK

Blackmail?

AUDREY

Devised the scam with the ram. And in later years? Who knows. And you can bet he covered his backside. But, of course, he hadn't counted on Katherine returning.

Pollock waits a beat, not wishing to interrupt this intriguing narrative.

Exhausted, Audrey leans her head back on the seat's headrest.

Pollock follows suit, savours the sun's last rays.

POLLOCK

So, who else knew?

AUDREY

About --?

POLLOCK

The deceased, Mister Hamilton?

AUDREY
Only my brother.

Audrey peers over her shoulder to

Father Jameson, beside an ambulance, eyes toward the heavens,
fumbles with his rosary beads.

AUDREY (O.S.)
Through the confessional. Brian
couldn't bring himself to betray
the confidence. All this might have
been sorted if he had. A few lives
saved - if not souls.

INT. CITY EDITOR'S OFFICE - NIGHT

Chrington at his desk reads a proof of the front page of the
tabloid on a huge monitor on his desk. He quotes:

CHRINGTON
*...with DNA in its infancy, apart
from official documents, the only
test for pedigree was in the eye of
the beholder.*

PIC: A YOUNG HARTMANN AND A CHINESE BUYER POSE WITH A REGAL
MERINO RAM.

RESUME CHRINGTON

CHRINGTON
*But the question remains Why? With
all parties now departed, one can
only speculate.*

He gives a reassuring nod to Pollock, buttocks on the desk.

CHRINGTON
*And then there is the issue of
compensation for the Chinese
government after all these years.
Might spell the complete demise of
the Tatiara Park dynasty.*

Chrington scrolls the screen. The headline reads:

RAM SCAM

With the sub:

Misplaced loyalty pays the price

And the by-line:

Zane Pollock, Rural Affairs

CHRIGHTON
Let's go with this.

He turns front on to Pollock.

CHRIGHTON
Now, to this fracking business.

EXT. SMALL FAMILY GRAVEYARD - DAY

Mourners at the excavated grave-site of Richard Sebastian Spencer at the rear of the chapel.

All except Audrey distance themselves from Katherine, this time in traditional mourning black.

Father Jameson labours over the final words of the eulogy, his sincerity struggles with his conscience.

FR JAMESON
... and we commend his soul to the
highest judge ...

As the dialog fades, from a short distance up the rise, Auntie emerges from the copse of trees.

The Mourners disperse, leave Katherine at the open grave.

Auntie sidles next to Katherine, picks up a sod of dirt, tosses it on the casket below.

AUNTIE
You back where you belong, young
fella. Back with your brother. In
Tatiara. Good country.

She links an arm in Katherine's.

Katherine reciprocates by bringing her other hand up to take hold of Auntie's, black with white, a kinship of sorts.

FADE OUT

THE END