

DUPLICITY

Written by

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FADE IN:

TATIARA DISTRICT IN S-E SOUTH AUSTRALIA:

'GOOD COUNTRY' IN THE LOCAL BINDJALI LANGUAGE.

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

OLD TOM SPENCER (late 70s) drives a dusty, late-ish model European car, along this minor road.

Various mobs of sheep graze in the broad open paddocks. Old Tom looks scornfully across beyond the sheep at some sort of drilling rig set up in the distance.

He clutches his chest and awkwardly tries to pull to a halt - in vain. The car veers into a fragile Mallee tree. The dust clears - no major damage.

Old Tom struggles to gather his wits, and his breath. He fades into semi-consciousness.

INT. BOARDROOM - DAY

MELBOURNE:

KATHERINE SPENCER (late-30s), black executive suit that spells elegance and success, places her laptop on the glass tabletop, opens it ready for business.

She joins three other FEMALE EXECS along with two MALES, similar age, similar devices - and confidence.

One of the Females punches some commands and a huge screen on a wall displays images of haute-couture designs.

YOUNG FEMALE EXECUTIVE #1  
We're bringing wool back in vogue.

EXT. RURAL BACK ROAD - DAY

A large 4-WD vehicle pulls up alongside Old Tom's car, nestled up against the mallee. The DRIVER, in scrubby work clothes, alights and rushes to Old Tom's car.

On the door of the vehicle is a sign:

*Kerogen Developments*

INT. TATIARA PARK KITCHEN - DAY

Last modernized in the nineteen-eighties.

AUDREY (late 50s), the domestic help, picks up the wall-mounted phone and delicately taps in a number.

MELBOURNE:

INT. BOARDROOM - DAY

Katherine et al close their lap-tops.

YOUNG FEMALE EXECUTIVE #1  
Okay, remember our ethos, there's  
always a market for the best. If we  
get this one right, there'll be no  
stopping Nova Marketing.

They stand in unison.

YOUNG FEMALE EXECUTIVE #1 (CONT'D)  
We're moving up, guys.

KATHERINE  
And remember - no ceilings, glass  
or otherwise.

They depart the Boardroom but as Katherine gets to the frosted glass door her mobile phone rings. She curtly farewells the others, checks the caller ID, curious.

KATHERINE (CONT'D)  
(into phone)  
Audrey? I'm not sure I -- Yes of  
course, Audrey. Yes, long time --

She stops in her tracks, listens intently.

INT. CITY APARTMENT - LOUNGE - NIGHT

Modern high-rise Melbourne city apartment. Katherine, in silky kimono robe, closes her valise and places it on the floor alongside other travel baggage. She moves into

BEDROOM:

She grabs a small remote unit from a sideboard, dims the lights and plays relaxing MUSIC, goes to the full-length windows and stares out up at the high-rise city lights.

EXT. ESSENDON AIRPORT TARMAC - DAY

A light commuter aircraft ascends into the sky.

INT. LIGHT AIRCRAFT - DAY - LATER

Katherine half dozes in her seat. The plane banks. She wakes, takes a casual look out the window.

EXT. PADDOCK - DAY

The aircraft circles over a mob of fleecy sheep, grazing on the lush country.

PADTHAWAY S-E SOUTH AUSTRALIA

EXT. AIRPORT - DAY

The light aircraft on a simple country airstrip.

Katherine walks from the plane and a scruffy Farm Hand, not long out of his teens, approaches her.

FARM HAND  
Miss Spencer?

KATHERINE  
"Miss"? Quaint.

He's bemused.

Katherine nods and smiles.

KATHERINE (CONT'D)  
Never mind.

The Farm Hand takes her luggage and they head toward Old Tom's car - cleaned, a minor dent to the front fender still visible.

As he stows the luggage, she presents an open palm, soliciting the keys.

FARM HAND  
It's a long drive, Miss. D'you know  
the --?

She plucks the keys from his hand.

EXT. COUNTRY ROAD - ENTRANCE GATEWAY - DAY

Katherine, with her Farm Hand passenger, drives Old Tom's car 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 toward the two-story sandstone homestead, stately despite years of neglect.

EXT. HOMESTEAD - VERANDAH - DAY

Audrey serves tea to a frail Old Tom, his daughter Katherine, and his lawyer RAYMOND HARTMANN(60) seated at a cane wicker table setting. Katherine looks toward

A Paddock:

CORY HAMILTON (40) rides a trail bike along a fence some distance off

VERANDAH:

KATHERINE

New hand?

Audrey looks toward Cory, turns quickly and departs.

OLD TOM

(matter-of-fact)

Hamilton. New manager.

Hartmann puts cup to lips but stops short, looks toward Cory. Miffed, he turns and stares a moment at the old man.

KATHERINE

New manager? I thought times were tough. What the Christ do you think I came all this way for?

OLD TOM

Don't use that language around here. If your mother were alive today --

KATHERINE

She'd be in misery, as usual.

Hartmann sits a little uneasy with all this.

OLD TOM  
You're still the insolent one  
aren't you. I didn't ask you to  
come back here to meddle again.

Katherine abruptly stands and addresses Hartmann.

KATHERINE  
Mister Hartmann. You've been this  
family's lawyer for many a year  
now. I trust you've managed to keep  
abreast of the times.

She turns and leaves.

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 (CONT'D)  
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 at the time and  
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 turns to the source of the noise.

VERANDAH:

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

KATHERINE:

Eyes burning, lingers momentarily but continues on her way, toward a chapel on a small rise in the near distance.

EXT. SMALL FAMILY GRAVEYARD - DAY

The rear of the chapel. Headstones reveal the extent of the dynasty. Katherine comes to a particular site;

*Richard Sebastian Spencer*  
*Born 4-1-1973*  
*Died 6-6-1996*

INT. DINING ROOM - LATE AFTERNOON

Olde world antique decor but far from dismal.

Katherine peruses the various paintings, portraits, mementos depicting the Spencer dynasty.

A framed black and white photo of a handsome young man in mid twenties in a convertible sports car (mid 90s era). A particularly attractive young woman and a girl in her teens (a young Katherine) stand either side. In the background, an older man.

KATHERINE  
 (mutters to herself)  
 So sorry, Ricky.

She moves past a photo of a ram with a caption:

*Sir James*  
*A Special Animal*  
*Adelaide, 1987*

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

THE HALLWAY: - CONTINUOUS

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

HARTMANN (O.S.)  
You don't owe him or his family anything.

OLD TOM (O.S.)  
Conscience is a curse.

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

INT. OLD TOM'S BEDROOM - LATE AFTERNOON - CONTINUOUS

Old Tom in a massive ancient brass bedstead. Beside him a bedside what-not; a tarnished silver filigree photo frame on a lace doily.

Katherine and the Nurse enter and interrupt Hartmann with the ailing Old Tom.

The Nurse goes about her business checking on her patient.

Hartmann, uneasy, excuses himself.

HARTMANN  
(to Old Tom)  
I'll finish the paper work.

Katherine potters nonchalantly about the room.

Old Tom sneers at the departing visitor.

KATHERINE  
I won't ask what that was about.

OLD TOM  
Good.

Katherine gestures that she will tend to her invalid father and the Nurse complies and leaves.

OLD TOM (CONT'D)  
You come to meddle again?

KATHERINE  
I know this much. I didn't walk from a perfectly good career in Melbourne just to come here to be insulted.

OLD TOM  
Well why don't you go back?

KATHERINE  
Because 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  
You should know. But old enough -  
for the record.

OLD TOM  
And still no man in your life.

Katherine scoffs.

OLD TOM (CONT'D)  
You want to be involved in men's  
affairs then 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.

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

OLD TOM (CONT'D)  
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-PADDOCK - LATE AFTERNOON

Horses graze in the small paddock. One in particular, a robust colt, stands apart from the others.

Katherine approaches with a halter.

The colt ambles up to her. She caresses its neck, quietly slips the halter on and gives the beast a thorough inspection before leading it off.

EXT. OPEN PADDOCK - LATE AFTERNOON

Late afternoon and Katherine rides competently through grazing sheep.

EXT. COTTAGE - LATE AFTERNOON

A neat, small, but adequate stone cottage. Another longer stone and corrugated iron dwelling - the Shearers' Quarters - within walking distance. And yet another, even larger building, the Shearing Shed, each a short distance from each other form a triangle of sorts.

Katherine, on her colt, approaches the cottage.

She dismounts and knocks on the front. No response.

She wanders about the place, peeks through windows. She returns to her horse as a well-worn 4-WD ute approaches.

She unconsciously checks her own grooming.

The vehicle comes to an abrupt halt causing the horse to shy a little and Katherine does well to control it.

Cory, tall, dark-haired, tanned, steps out of the vehicle, goes to assist Katherine restrain the horse.

CORY  
Sorry.

Katherine is momentarily captivated by this young man's general appeal, but takes complete charge of her animal.

CORY (CONT'D)  
I didn't expect any one to be here.

He offers his hand.

CORY (CONT'D)  
Cory Hamilton.

She hesitates at first but then takes it firmly in a business-like manner.

KATHERINE  
Katherine. Spencer.

CORY  
Ah, right.

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

KATHERINE  
Just taking stock of things. The old park's not as vast as I imagined as a little kid.

He returns to the vehicle and gathers a final carton.

CORY  
Nostalgia is a cruel master.

The last carton is overloaded with books and as he places it on the verandah some of its contents spill.

Katherine bends down and retrieves one of the books, titled *The Law of Torts* and hands it to Cory who tidies up the rest of the carton.

He leaves the cartons there alongside a bleached skull and spiral horns of a long deceased ram. He invites Katherine in.

CORY (CONT'D)  
It's never locked.

She smiles and politely declines the invitation.

CORY (CONT'D)  
So, how's your father?

KATHERINE  
Lost his grip on things. Forgive me being blunt but - well, why hire you?

Cory's tone changes - he is quite deliberate.

CORY  
I had a good reference.

KATHERINE  
(a bitterness in her  
voice)  
The fact is, I'm more than capable.  
But --

Bidding her indulgence, he picks up the carton again.

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

She re-mounts her horse.

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

Cory stands at the doorway and watches her ride off.

INT. OLD TOM'S BEDROOM - DUSK

The parish priest FATHER BRIAN JAMEISON (mid 60s) administers comfort to the semi-comatose Old Tom. The onset of mature age has yet to blemish the Priest's youthful, vigorous stature.

Old Tom wakes and feebly reaches out for the priest who solemnly takes his hand.

OLD TOM  
(laboured)  
Katherine.

FR JAMEISON  
She's apparently out.

With difficulty he slowly shakes his head.

OLD TOM  
I want you to protect her.

FR JAMEISON  
She's a grown woman.

OLD TOM  
You know what I mean.

The Priest gently massages the older man's hand.

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

The old man slowly places his other hand around that of the priest and gently massages it. Father Jameison's eyes, however, betray an inner turmoil.

EXT. STABLES - DUSK

Katherine, her mount at a gentle trot, approaches the stables from the rear of the homestead.

She dismounts, leads her charge to its stall, competently removes its saddlery and settles the animal for the night.

EXT. HOMESTEAD - DUSK

Katherine comes to the front of the house. She falters.

A number of cars parked outside. Among them, a 4-WD with the dusty signage 'Kerogen Developments' on the door.

INT. HOMESTEAD - DUSK - CONTINUOUS

THE LANDING UPSTAIRS:

Katherine approaches the door to Old Tom's Bedroom just as a DOCTOR exits. He gives her a solemn look. She enters

OLD TOM'S BEDROOM:

With Audrey in attendance, Father Jameison 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 scathing look toward Father Jameison does not go unnoticed by a passive Katherine.

EXT. CHAPEL - DAY

Following behind Father Jameison, Hartmann and other PALL BEARERS carry an elaborate casket from the chapel - followed a short distance behind by Katherine.

Most of the MOURNERS are in traditional black but Katherine has a simple black and white day dress.

EXT. SMALL FAMILY GRAVEYARD - DAY

The Mourners gather quietly around a newly-prepared grave.

Katherine looks off to something beyond.

Cory stands aloof from the rest of the crowd.

INT. HARTMANN'S OFFICE - DAY

In his plush city office, Hartmann, in a cautious, almost reluctant tone, reads a document to Katherine.

HARTMAN

*"I thus make this bequest to my sole surviving daughter on the express understanding that...  
a) my Executor, Mister Raymond Hartmann remain as the property's accountant and lawyer for as long as he shall so desire... and  
b) that Mister Cory Hamilton shall be retained as manager for as long as he so desires or...  
b.1)...until his death or  
b.2)...until such time as my daughter shall take a man in marriage, which ever event is the sooner --"*

She interrupts, trying 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! What fucking century was he living in?

Hartmann consults his wristwatch.

INT. EXCLUSIVE CLUB - DAY

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

Katherine is the youngest of only a few women present and she 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 (CONT'D)

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

Another gentleman, HARRY PURCELL (late 60s) whose apparel affords him landed gentry status, walks past the couple and casually acknowledges Hartmann - and flippantly asks.

PURCELL

Raymond. How's the new venture coming along?

Hartmann shifts in his seat, uneasy with the question. But Purcell, turns his attention to Katherine.

HARTMANN

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

Purcell's demeanour changes, becomes awkward in her presence.

PURCELL

Miss Spencer, I didn't recognise you. The prodigal daughter returns.

Hartmann places his 'reassuring' hand upon Katherine's.

Keen to depart, Purcell adds

PURCELL (CONT'D)

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

On Purcell's departure, Katherine delicately removes her hand from under Hartmann's.

KATHERINE  
New venture?

HARTMANN  
Client confidentiality.

They continue their lunch in silence.

INT. STUDY - DAY

Katherine casually peruses older style business accounts ledgers - she's not impressed with the state of affairs.

A knock on a door somewhere is followed by muffled chatter.

Audrey pokes her head in the door.

AUDREY  
It's arrived. It's out the front now.

Katherine closes the ledgers and exits the study.

In the Hallway, she calls back to Audrey.

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

FRONT DOOR - CONTINUOUS

Katherine exits and greets a waiting VAN DRIVER.

VAN DRIVER  
Where would you like it?

EXT. HOMESTEAD - VERANDAH - DAY - CONTINUOUS

Katherine leads the Van Driver down the steps to the National Broadband contractor van parked on newly laid gravel. She points to the side of the building.

KATHERINE  
Well, the study's around this side, so what do you think?

VAN DRIVER  
On to it.

KATHERINE  
At last, the twenty-first century.

INT. STUDY - LATE AFTERNOON

SCREEN OF LAPTOP COMPUTER:

A spreadsheet dealing with *Australian Woolcheque prices* - at record high.

A few keyboard strokes and this information comes up in graphic form.

Audrey, in street clothes, enters.

AUDREY  
More coffee before I leave?

Katherine is concentrating intensely and only half turns.

KATHERINE  
I'll make some later, thanks.

AUDREY  
So it's all up and running?

Katherine nods.

Audrey reciprocates.

AUDREY (CONT'D)  
Yes, well your dinner's in 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 (CONT'D)  
You sure you're okay with three days a week? I know it's a bit awkward after all these years - it's just that 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 (CONT'D)  
Hope you find something you fancy.

Katherine smiles and returns to 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. On the study desk, beside the computer, a dinner plate with the few remains of a meal, a drained cafetière.

Katherine, weary-eyed, fights to stay awake as she scrolls through the links of the Australian Wool Fashion Awards site displaying 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 Australian pure new wool everywhere.

In her prime position seat, Katherine takes in the glamour, the style.

She checks the time on her phone and consults a programme she holds. She 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 'audience', resplendent in their RM Williams apparel, Katherine makes her way toward a vantage point...

...all the time being assessed by some of the more eligible YOUNGER MALES.

AUCTION RING:

A Handler parades a most regal looking ram.

VIEWING AREA:

Nearby is Harry Purcell. He doffs his Akubra to Katherine. Without waiting for formal invite, she wonders over to him.

PURCELL  
Ah, Miss Spencer.

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

PURCELL  
Purcell, Harold Purcell.

Katherine dwells a moment, recollecting.

PURCELL (CONT'D)  
(awkward)  
Perhaps you remember my daughter Jennifer? And your late brother Richard?

Katherine's memory is jogged.

KATHERINE  
Yes of course. Ricky and Jennifer. Some things I'll always remember. My father made sure of that.

PURCELL  
You can't be held responsible for the frailties of others.

Reluctant to pursue this line of discourse any longer,

PURCELL (CONT'D)  
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, ladies and gentlemen-- Lot 178. Never, since the days of Sir James, has there been a more magnificent beast. I'll now open the bidding --*  
(The Auctioneer's VOICE continues under, accepting bids...)

KATHERINE  
 Yes, well, it's a bit like art  
 isn't? --

PURCELL  
 It's a bit more than that, girlie.

KATHERINE  
 (undeterred by the  
 chauvenism)  
 We all know a Michelangelo when we  
 see one ...

AUCTION RING:

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

KATHERINE (O.S.) (CONT'D)  
 ... and the David I see before me  
 now will scare the tits off Dolly  
 Parton ...

The Handler turns the animal to display the gross dangling  
 genitals of the beast.

KATHERINE (O.S.) (CONT'D)  
 ... hopefully perform like Ron  
 Jeremy or good old Harry Reems ...  
 ... and will give me, no doubt, a  
 consistent twenty-two micron clip  
 for which I know those gentlemen  
 over there ...

VIEWING AREA:

A small group of Asian gentlemen huddle in conference

KATHERINE AND PURCELL:

KATHERINE (CONT'D)  
 ... will gladly pay seven fifty  
 clean.

She looks at the gob-smacked Purcell.

KATHERINE (CONT'D)  
 And yourself?

PURCELL  
 Nothing much that appeals -  
 seriously thinking of selling up.

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

PURCELL (CONT'D)  
You've not been swayed yet?

Katherine is ignorant of what Purcell is talking about.

PURCELL (CONT'D)  
Hartmann and those, you know, those  
woolly things from South America.  
"al" whatever they're called?

KATHERINE  
Alpacas?

PURCELL  
That's right. Dumber than sheep, so  
I'm told. He probably wants a  
repeat of 1987 - only with one of  
those beasts.

Katherine is bemused by this last comment.

But she's 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.

With an air of confidence she turns back to Purcell.

KATHERINE  
So, what's this about --?

But Purcell has taken the opportunity to move on.

EXT. SHOWGROUNDS - DAY

SERIES OF SHOTS:

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

She moves into a huge marquee.

INT. HUGE MARQUEE - DAY

Katherine wanders through a display stand set up by the Tatiara District Council, part of which is a list of the Executive and Councillors.

Katherine gives this a cursory glance, moves away a pace but returns to it, places a finger on a name.

She approaches an attendant, LEN MAJOR (50s).

MAJOR

Yes miss?

KATHERINE

'Ms' Spencer - Katherine.

MAJOR

Ah, Spencer. There's a name that rings a bell. Len Major, Director, Community Well-being. How can I help?

KATHERINE

Just browsing, getting to know who's who. I notice the name 'Hartmann'.

MAJOR

Hartmann, yes. Heard the name.

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.

She smiles diplomatically, looks around at other display boards, one with huge aerial photo of the Tatiara District.

INT. STUDY - LATE AFTERNOON

Katherine peruses a map of the Tatiara District, spread out over her desk, the boundaries of the current Spencer family's Tatiara Park highlighted.

She leans back and stretches - notices on the wall an old aerial survey of Tatiara Park. She's piqued.

She compares the two images. The current holdings are much smaller than shown on the old aerial survey.

EXT. OPEN SCRUBLAND - DAY

The broad expanse of one of the grazing paddocks, storm clouds gathering. Cory, on trail bike, separates various sheep from a huge flock.

Katherine arrives on horseback but keeps her distance, content to watch.

Cory comes up alongside Katherine, disturbing her mount. But her soothing strokes soon reassure the animal.

CORY  
Ah, my new boss.

KATHERINE  
I am who I am.

Cory accepts her honesty.

KATHERINE (CONT'D)  
I've been doing some checking.  
Found some old maps and surveys.

She looks around in the saddle, scans the surrounds.

KATHERINE (CONT'D)  
It seems the little empire has  
indeed shrunk. Gone. Haven't found  
any records yet, so I've no idea  
where --

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.

Again Katherine watches, impressed.

On his return

CORY (CONT'D)  
Sorry, where were we?

KATHERINE  
For some reason the old man off-  
loaded much of the Park and just  
let what's left of the place go  
downhill. Obviously couldn't read  
the markets any more.

(MORE)

KATHERINE (CONT'D)

And with the mounting bills, it's going to take some doing to get this place back on its feet. So I'm betting on a resurgence in wool.

CORY

And if there's not?

KATHERINE

If there's not? I was wondering --

But Katherine suddenly heads off and, with impressive equestrian skills, regroups the small number of sheep Cory had separated from the main flock.

On her return ...

KATHERINE (CONT'D)

What do you know of alpacas? They say they're dumber than sheep.

CORY

Hard to tell by looking. No right to be here, regardless.

(He looks back at the sheep and mutters )

But then, neither have they for that matter.

Hearing this, Katherine shrugs.

KATHERINE

Either way, we're at the mercy of the market, so I'll be making my decisions accordingly.

She turns around in her saddle to look off.

KATHERINE (CONT'D)

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 clouds.

KATHERINE (CONT'D)

So I'll leave you to it if you don't mind.

And she turns and rides off, leaving him to his own immediate tasks.

EXT. OPEN SCRUBLAND - LATE AFTERNOON

Rumbling thunder. Lightning arcs the darkening landscape.

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

Up ahead, Katherine's riderless horse, wandering disoriented. Cory alights his bike and cautiously approaches the horse and takes its reins.

With horse in tow, he returns to his bike and slowly moves off, tracking as the sky darkens and threatens to open.

LATER - DARKER:

Pre-storm rain. Cory comes across a dazed Katherine lying close by a rocky outcrop.

He alights the bike, undertakes a preliminary examination. Outwardly, she has little more than a grazed cheek.

He cradles her. She opens her eyes long enough to recognise him.

CORY

You feel up to being moved?

She nods feebly then closes her eyes again, semi-conscious.

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 - DUSK - CONTINUOUS

Katherine stirs as Cory places her on the cavern floor.

KATHERINE

Do I know this place?

CORY

I doubt it. It's a special place. I believe it's what's termed "a sacred site". So chances are, No.

KATHERINE

In other words I shouldn't be here.

CORY

Not sure that I should be. My dad pointed it out to me once when I was little. Just before we left.

(MORE)

CORY (CONT'D)

Apparently a place for elders to meditate, if that's the appropriate term, before they went walkabout. Least that's the story he told me.

He stands.

CORY (CONT'D)

Still, it's probably best we stay for the duration.

He leaves Katherine feeling not entirely at ease in the eerie emptiness of what light there is.

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

Without further ado he exits the cavern again. She looks all about her, straining her eyes to discern any features. With effort, she removes her smart phone from her jeans pocket.

Again Cory returns, this time with arms laden with dead wood, twigs and grasses, some reasonably dry despite the rain.

CORY (CONT'D)

Doubt if you'll get reception in these parts.

She returns the phone to her pocket as he takes a folded sheet of paper from the back pocket of his moleskins.

CORY (CONT'D)

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

He sets up the fire, tearing the "to-do-list" in pieces to assist his fire.

KATHERINE

Just for the record, I don't smoke.

Cory turns to her with a feigned frown.

CORY

Nor I.

Then, holding two twigs in his hands he re-assures her.

CORY (CONT'D)

Shouldn't be a problem though.

He turns his back on her, leans over the firewood, goes through the (apparent) motion of rubbing the two sticks.

After a Beat, a twirl of smoke eddies upwards.

Katherine is duly impressed.

Cory turns to her, smiles cheekily, 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  
(amused)  
Thanks.

Cory stokes the fire.

CORY  
Afraid there's nothing for dinner.

They stare, mesmerized, as the flames tell their own interesting story.

KATHERINE  
(breaking the silence)  
So what brought you to these parts?

CORY  
My father suggested I might find some work. He worked around here for quite a while. Many years ago. When things were better.

KATHERINE  
"Better"? I see. So there's room for change?

CORY  
Nothing drastic. Wouldn't be right to destroy the land any more. Just stick to what your forefathers had in mind when the area was first, shall we say, taken up.

KATHERINE  
You speak as if you knew them.

CORY  
Not personally.

Katherine acknowledges the humour.

CORY (CONT'D)  
My own family was in this district for more than a few generations.  
(MORE)

CORY (CONT'D)

I still have an auntie around here  
somewhere, I believe.

KATHERINE

Do I know your family?

CORY

I doubt it. Most of us departed  
these lands many years ago.

Katherine winces as she tries to move. Cory settles her back  
as comfortable as possible against her saddle.

CORY (CONT'D)

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

Katherine proffers an appreciative smile.

KATHERINE

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

Cory turns again to attend the glowing 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 hiding the signage on the door. The sound  
of a trail bike approaching, crunching over the gravel.

Cory, with a bedraggled Katherine clinging to his waist, sits  
precariously on the meagre rider's seat and with the horse in  
tow, pulls slowly up to the steps.

Katherine dismounts the bike, goes to her horse and pats its  
neck a few times, then mounts the steps to the verandah as  
Cory slowly leads the horse off.

Hartmann stares first at Katherine then at Cory and again at  
Katherine. Without waiting for an invitation, he follows her  
inside.

INT. HALLWAY - MORNING - CONTINUOUS

Hartmann timidly follows Katherine down the Hallway.

KATHERINE

What brings you to the good  
country? Come to stake a claim?

HARTMANN  
Stake a ...?

KATHERINE  
Why not? Enjoy the spoils. Isn't  
that how it goes?

HARTMANN  
(flustered)  
No, no... I just --

Raising eyebrows, she taunts him, goads him.

HARTMANN (CONT'D)  
Business. Elsewhere in the  
district.

KATHERINE  
Your new venture?  
(doesn't wait for reply)  
You won't mind if I tidy up a bit?

HARTMANN  
I won't ask what's been going on.

Katherine responds with an impish smile. Wincing at the discomfort of her aching joints, she briskly mounts the stairs, passing Audrey dusting the bannisters.

On the Landing, Katherine turns back to the not so athletic Hartmann.

KATHERINE  
Let's just say I had an enchanting  
night in a magic cave.

The flippant comment causes Audrey consternation. Hartmann says nothing as he follows her to her bedroom.

KATHERINE'S BEDROOM:

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

KATHERINE (CONT'D)  
So, down here for business?

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

Katherine enters a small ante-room. Over the sound of a gushing shower

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

HARTMANN  
 (suspicious)  
 I wouldn't read too much into --

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

KATHERINE (O.S.)  
 I understand there is a new market out there.

Hartmann is uneasy until she reveals

KATHERINE (O.S.) (CONT'D)  
 Like doing what the Royals do. You know, open up the place to tourists et cetera, refurbish some of the shearers' quarters for the holiday makers or whatever. What do you think?

SILENCE

KATHERINE (O.S.) (CONT'D)  
 Or perhaps you might have a few other ideas for the place?

But Hartmann is caught off guard and after some hesitation.

HARTMANN  
 Well, certainly, I'd give it some thought.

He looks around at the feminine touches Katherine has added to the room.

A few moments elapse before Katherine, in her slinky kimono robe emerges from the ante-room.

KATHERINE  
 (alluringly)  
 Well, what do you think?

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

KATHERINE (CONT'D)  
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 (CONT'D)  
The market! That's your forte,  
isn't it?

HARTMANN  
Well, yes. Like I said, I'll give  
it some thought.

She catches him hurriedly consult his watch.

KATHERINE  
Better not keep him waiting.

She smiles derisively, unties her robe.

Hartmann exits without further ado as Katherine sheds the robe as she returns to the now steamy ante-room.

EXT. HOMESTEAD - VERANDAH - AFTERNOON

Father Jameison, alone at the end of the verandah, gazes at the vastness of the land beyond the chapel on the hill.

His moment of solace is interrupted by Audrey placing a tray of tea and biscuits on the small cane table setting.

They both look up to greet Katherine, a small band-aid covering her grazed cheek.

The priest looks to Audrey but she remains aloof and departs.

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

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

Katherine regards this declaration with a little suspicion as she pours the tea.

FR JAMEISON (CONT'D)

Perhaps there is a minor ulterior motive. I feel I owe it to Old Tom to --

KATHERINE

To what?

FR JAMEISON

His wish was that I monitor your spiritual progress. For want of another term.

KATHERINE

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

FR JAMEISON

Perhaps we might see you at mass again soon. Maybe even confession. You used to be quite a little Miss Regular in your younger days. Before you headed off to boarding school.

KATHERINE

It meant something then.

FR JAMEISON

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 JAMEISON

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 JAMEISON

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

She subtly shakes her head.

FR JAMEISON (CONT'D)  
But I gather that's not a likely  
scenario.

They sip tea - something of an impasse.

FR JAMEISON (CONT'D)  
Look, not meaning to get personal --

KATHERINE  
But --

FR JAMEISON  
Assuming 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 man by her side.

KATHERINE  
Is that so?

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

KATHERINE  
And who might that be?

FR JAMEISON  
Mine's not to try and influence  
you. But might I say, 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?

Touché

KATHERINE (CONT'D)  
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 (CONT'D)  
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 looking out again to the property beyond, continues

KATHERINE (CONT'D)

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. If I let it continue the way it's been going, it might just as well revert back to the natives.

FR JAMEISON

And would that be an injustice?

She sips her tea most defiantly.

INT. COTTAGE - EVENING

The entrance from the front verandah leads into a general purpose dining-cum-lounge room, the Main Room. With its well-stocked bookshelves, it could well pass as a gentleman's den.

Cory, well groomed, in fashionable outback apparel, reads a hardback novel by the gentle light of a standard lamp beside the plush leather chair.

The faint sound of a vehicle pulling up outside.

Footsteps upon the verandah. A gentle tap on the front door.

Leaving the book on the chair, Cory answers the door.

Katherine, the faintest of scars on her cheek, stands in the open doorway faintly illuminated by the light from the lamp, her hands held behind her.

CORY

No broken bones I see.

Pleased to see her, he ushers her in.

From behind her back she offers him a gift.

KATHERINE

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

He is ambivalent about the gift - a bottle of port.

CORY

Booze. How apt. Still, a pleasant thought.

She is a little bemused by the comment as he takes it to a sideboard, removes a folded handkerchief from his pocket, flaps it open and wipes away remnants of dust.

KATHERINE

From the cellar.

He removes its cork, pours one glass only and turns to see her standing by the small fireplace, admiring a ram's skull mounted above a shotgun resting on the mantle-piece.

She accepts the glass of wine he offers, notices he doesn't have one.

KATHERINE (CONT'D)

I don't like to drink alone.

CORY

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

KATHERINE

All things in moderation.

CORY

True. But some people were denied the meaning.

He turns back to the sideboard and pours himself a glass of port, raises his glass and they both sip.

Katherine looks intently at him. He does not avert her gaze.

He breaks the silence.

CORY (CONT'D)

I suppose you'll now want to know more about me, what makes me tick. Isn't that how these conversations go? Loosen the tongue and see what flows?

His impertinence brings her thudding back to earth.

KATHERINE

I had hoped simply for a polite conversation.

She places her glass on a what-not and moves toward the door.

CORY

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

KATHERINE  
I looked at you?

An awkward situation.

CORY  
Yes. Like you were studying me.  
And. I'm sorry.

Katherine softens.

KATHERINE  
I didn't think there'd be much 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 (CONT'D)  
... sooner or later.

Again she looks him intently in the eye, 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. It's obvious you  
are adequate for the task and  
presumably qualified.

CORY  
I had a good reference, remember?

KATHERINE  
Then they'll be in good hands.

She raises her glass as a toast. Cory obliges.

EXT. SANDSTONE BUILDING - STREET - 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

I think you'll find this to be one of the better gangs around. They should work well with this new man of yours.

Katherine gives him an inquisitive look. He smiles reassuringly, continuing to shake her hand.

OGILVIE (CONT'D)

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

KATHERINE

Always good in a man.

She finally frees her hand from his.

KATHERINE (CONT'D)

Once again, thanks for your assistance.

She starts to move off along the footpath.

OGILVIE

Oh, and I trust I'll have the pleasure of at least one dance?

She smiles alluringly without commenting and moves along the footpath to

OLD RESTORED STONE HALL:

She passes by a small group of NUNGA (indigenous) women congregated outside. All but one, AUNTIE (70s) avert their eyes.

Auntie says nothing. Katherine manages an awkward smile as the others whisper, some in English, some in local Bindjali dialect.

GROUP

That one.

Katherine continues on, passes the entrance to the hall.

A sandwich-board sign outside promotes an exhibition of aboriginal art within the local Library-Museum. She considers a moment... but continues on her way.

INT. SHEARING SHED - DAY

Cory busies himself checking equipment, generally organizing the space. Adorning the walls are memorabilia from the past.

Katherine enters.

He looks up but ignores her and continues with his task.

She casually follows him as he goes about his business.

KATHERINE

Takes me back.

CORY

Hmmm?

KATHERINE

Always used to look forward to this time of the year. Took me years to realize this is why they invented the term "masochist".

Cory acknowledges her perception.

KATHERINE (CONT'D)

I always tried to help whenever I could. Along with Richard - my late brother. The old man was never keen on me being there, though.

She takes from the wall and fondles an ancient pair of hand shears.

She tries to operate them, with little success, switches from one hand to the other and accidentally drops them. They land point first, sticking into the lanolin preserved wooden floor boards, only centimetres from Cory's boot.

He casually looks down at the floor, not moving his boot. He calmly bends over, removes the shears and replaces them.

CORY

Dangerous in the wrong hands.

KATHERINE

I'll bear that in mind.

Her eyes twinkle. She looks about the shed.

KATHERINE (CONT'D)

So what about you? All this seems to be second nature to you.

CORY

My old man did a bit of it. When he could get it. Did a bit of everything. When he could get it. I tagged along on occasions. Found ways to amuse myself, watching others. Called experience.

He wipes perspiration from his brow.

KATHERINE

I'll get out of your way, then.

He moves to a refrigerated water fountain as she leaves.

KATHERINE (CONT'D)

Yell out if you need anything else.

He watches her depart. Alone, he turns to the water fountain and pours himself a pannikin and sips.

INT. SHEARING SHED - DAY

ANOTHER DAY

Cory, navy singlet, 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 etc

Cory plays rouse-about as he oversees the various tasks being performed.

Here and there one or another Shearer makes a chalk mark on their respective tally board.

Other ROUSEABOUTS gather the fleece, fling it over the grated table.

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

INT. STUDY - DAY

Katherine, at the computer, samples of the clip beside her on the desk, compiles figures on the wool-clip from the property. She's pleased with the figures before her.

INT. HOTEL FRONT BAR - NIGHT

Shearers from the Tatiara Park, among other LOCALS, are heavily into drinking. It's a pleasant enough affair; some are inebriated; others not quite so.

At one end of the bar a collection of Whites and Nungas socialize playing pool. PUB MUSIC plays loudly.

EXT. TOWN HALL - NIGHT

Up-market vehicles, many beyond the means of the common labourer, clog the street outside the spotlight Town Hall.

Parked a short distance away from the lights of the Town Hall is a scruffy looking Mercedes from which emerges a couple of YOUNG COCKYS (farmers) dressed in dinner suits, each with partly consumed liquor bottles in hand.

INT. TOWN HALL - NIGHT

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

Standing by the cocktail bar is Hartmann amusing his younger partner SALLY (late 20s), tarted-up and looking out of place.

A PHOTOGRAPHER is about to take a snap of them but he stops and turns his attention elsewhere.

Midway through the music, eyes tend toward the entrance foyer. GUESTS mutter to each other then resume their dancing... after a fashion.

Hartmann's mouth drops.

Katherine enters, resplendent in chic and revealing black evening dress, accompanied by none other than Cory Hamilton looking every bit the matinee idol.

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

PURCELL  
 (to Katherine, barely  
 acknowledging Cory)  
 Miss Spencer, once again. So good  
 you made it. It's been many a year  
 since you graced this hall. Not  
 since Richard --  
 (he checks himself)  
 Still, many a year. Oh and  
 congratulations on a successful  
 clip.

After a snap by the Photographer, he speaks to her as an  
 aside.

PURCELL (CONT'D)  
 Your three ladies are made up and  
 ready to waltz.

Katherine nods appreciatively as Cory escorts her to an  
 isolated table.

Hartmann drags Sally with him to the table of the new  
 arrivals for a contrived encounter.

HARTMANN  
 Well. What do we have here?

Katherine, who still sports the ever-so-faint remnant of her  
 grazed cheek beneath subtle make-up, looks up derisively.

KATHERINE  
 And good evening to you too,  
 Raymond. You know Mister Hamilton  
 of course.

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

KATHERINE (CONT'D)  
 But I don't believe we've met --

HARTMANN  
 Oh, er, Sally. Sally Fitzpatrick.

Sally smiles her best "Society" smile possible.

KATHERINE  
 I take it you're not from the  
 district?

But before Sally can respond, Hartmann intervenes.

HARTMANN  
Not from this district, no.

Lacking the refined social skills of most of the others present, Sally looks for an excuse to end these proceedings.

SALLY  
(to Hartmann)  
Isn't this our dance you promised?

No escape. Hartmann escorts her off without so much as an "excuse me".

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

CORY  
See what I can muster.

He heads off as the Music comes to an end.

HARTMANN'S TABLE:

Hartmann escorts a sullen Sally back to the table.

No sooner seated, she sips her punch but dribbles a little. She grabs a tissue from her evening purse to wipe her chin, inadvertently smudging her make-up.

SALLY  
Ooh. Might just go and powder my nose.

Hartmann, still standing, looks at the smudged lipstick and insincerely smiles his agreement. His gaze follows her momentarily to the ladies' room but she's the least of his concerns.

KATHERINE'S TABLE:

Katherine alone.

Totally without formality, Hartmann again approaches and 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 think.

KATHERINE

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

HARTMANN

Probably turning in his grave.

Katherine shakes her head in disbelief, dismissing this comment.

HARTMANN (CONT'D)

I mean really. A common farm labourer.

KATHERINE

Oh, I don't know. He's rather uncommon if you ask me. In case you've forgotten, he is the manager of the Park, appointed by none other than my father.

HARTMANN

And the rest of the world speculates why.

KATHERINE

Raymond darling. Do I take it that you are speaking out of concern for my welfare? Or is there perhaps something else on your mind?

HARTMANN

(put out)

How do you mean?

KATHERINE

Woo the heiress. Marry the heiress. You know, grab the golden fleece.

But before Hartmann can defend himself, Cory arrives back with drinks. Hartmann's attitude suddenly changes; but Cory senses the tension.

KATHERINE (CONT'D)

Perhaps we can chat over morning tea.

The music starts again.

## HARTMANN'S TABLE:

Sally at her table sans Hartmann. She surveys the scene. One of the young Cockys approaches and requests a dance. She's unsure. Hartmann arrives back and has no hesitation in nodding his consent.

He sits there, nursing his drink as the band plays on.

## EXT. TOWN HALL - NIGHT

## LATER - THE STREET OUTSIDE:

The spotlights are doused. The Guests drift out through the main entrance of the Town Hall, making their way to their 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 rhythmically.

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

## INT/EXT. 4-WD 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  
I gather Richard was --

KATHERINE  
My late brother, yes.

CORY  
A sore point?

KATHERINE

A sore point.

They drive on in silence. She steals a glance at his manly profile, a 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, leaving a lighter patch on the wall. She stares at it. A tear wells. Anguish. She smashes it on the back of a chair, holds the wreckage, sobbing.

INT. PARISH CHURCH - MORNING

A PARISHIONER exits the confessional. Katherine, sitting on the end of the adjacent pew, consults her wrist-watch, stands and enters.

CONFESSIONAL

FR JAMEISON (O.S.)

Yes my child.

Katherine begins, more by way of proud declaration than contrite confession.

KATHERINE

Been a long time between drinks.

FR JAMEISON (O.S.)

It's customary to begin with --

KATHERINE

(interrupting, contrived  
contrition)

Forgive me father for I have sinned. Lately I've been having carnal thoughts. Not unusual perhaps for a woman in my position.

INTERCUT:

PRIEST'S CHAMBER:

FR JAMEISON

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 even sure that there is any difference.

FR JAMEISON

Do I take it that it is more than mere 'thoughts'? Could it be there is an object of your desire.

KATHERINE

I think we can safely say there is.

FR JAMEISON

And how long has this person been in your life?

KATHERINE

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

Father Jameison nods paternally - until his confessor adds

KATHERINE (O.S.) (CONT'D)

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

And he shows concern beyond that of the Father Confessor.

FR JAMEISON

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 JAMEISON

(breaking into a bit of a sweat)

(MORE)

FR JAMEISON (CONT'D)  
Still, I would counsel against  
haste.

KATHERINE  
You say that as if you know  
something I should.

FR JAMEISON  
I know only - do only - what the  
heavenly Father counsels me.

Katherine consults her wrist-watch again.

KATHERINE  
Ah yes, the Father.

Ignoring any other formalities of the confessional, she  
stands and exits the cubicle.

Father Jameison sits a moment, fumbling his Rosary with a  
trembling hand, a moment of nervous cogitation.

INT. HOTEL DINING ROOM - MORNING - LATER

An ornate heritage-listed hotel.

Hartmann and Katherine take brunch. They have their coffees.

HARTMANN  
I believe she's out riding with her  
young cocky friend.  
(a smirk)  
Be a pleasant change from the sheep  
he's probably used to.

Katherine is not amused.

HARTMANN (CONT'D)  
She'd better not get too carried  
away. Unless she wants to walk back  
to Adelaide.

He consults his watch.

KATHERINE  
You sound put out.

HARTMANN  
Seems to be a past-time down here,  
lately.

KATHERINE  
Oh?

HARTMANN

Was a time I was considered part of the family and as such a room at the Park was there for my asking.

KATHERINE

Obviously my father saw you in a different light.

He gives her a most evil look.

KATHERINE (CONT'D)

What's important is our future development, not the past. And I for one are planning on many more successful clips. But if we ever resort to taking in guests again, paying guests, you'll be more than welcome.

Hartmann scoffs.

KATHERINE (CONT'D)

But I gather you'd prefer other developments?

HARTMANN

Let's just say that having been your father's lawyer for all those years, I simply want the best for the Park now that Old Tom's gone.

Katherine views him suspiciously.

KATHERINE

It was a long time wasn't it? And being "part of the family", you must have been privy to quite a deal of information.

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.

He is made uneasy by her emphasis of his first name.

KATHERINE (CONT'D)  
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 the books.

KATHERINE  
Everything? That's not very  
comforting, considering how old  
school they are.

She changes tack.

KATHERINE (CONT'D)  
What about our Mister Hamilton?

HARTMANN  
What about him?

KATHERINE  
I have this gut feeling that you'd  
prefer he wasn't in his present  
position.

He sits uneasily.

KATHERINE (CONT'D)  
Now, why should this be, I wonder?

He turns in his seat and stares out of the window.

HARTMANN  
Funny, I thought it was you who  
wanted to see him go.

He turns back to her.

HARTMANN (CONT'D)  
But something's changed your mind  
it seems.

A taunting smile from Katherine. She takes a final sip of her  
coffee and 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 etc. Katherine turns to exit, then checks herself and turns back to Hartmann.

KATHERINE

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

She exits, Hartmann staring daggers at her swank backside.

He rudely dismisses the Waitress.

INT/EXT. 4-WD UTE TRAVELLING - COUNTRY ROAD - DAY

LATER

In the 4-WD ute with its rudimentary steel mesh caging, Katherine drives Cory through the fertile countryside.

Breaking the silence

KATHERINE

Had brunch with our friend Raymond earlier today.

Cory does not respond.

She continues, maintaining her nonchalance.

KATHERINE (CONT'D)

Don't trust him. Bloody lawyer!

Cory manages a wry smile.

Katherine peers at him out of the corner of her eye and they drive on.

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.

As the vehicle goes past the homestead, there's 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, yelping and carrying 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.

A young bloke, KEVIN (20s) emerges, beckons them drive toward one of many smaller holding pens in which are huddled three sheep.

The car stops, Kevin leans against the driver's door.

KEVIN

G'day, Kevin the name. Found it all right, eh?

Looking past Katherine he addresses Cory.

KEVIN (CONT'D)

Mister Purcell's not back yet, sorry. Asked me over to help ya sort it all out. They're just here.

He steps back from the ute and beckons Katherine and Cory follow him to the small pen holding the ewes.

KEVIN (CONT'D)

Must admit, I gotta agree with him.

CORY

How's that?

KEVIN

Well, you know. Not much future in this game. And here's you wanting these little ladies. Why?

KATHERINE

Let's put it this way, Kevin. We have the "y", but for our future in this game we'll be needing a few good "x"s, now won't we?

Not expecting a response from Katherine, it takes yokel Kevin a few seconds to get the gist of her comment.

CORY

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

They enter the holding pen.

KEVIN

Yeah, but is it gonna pay given the cost? The market's been down --

Assisted by the excited Kelpies, they usher the three ewes and load the animals into the ute's mesh cage.

KATHERINE

Always a market for quality. And quality doesn't cost, it pays.

Kevin ensures the cage is secure and steps back from the ute as the others enter the cab, Katherine again behind the wheel.

KEVIN

Yeah, anyway, sorry again about the boss. Didn't know when he'd be back. Had to see some bloke before he drove back to Adelaide.

Katherine's look is a rudimentary, polite enquiry.

KEVIN (CONT'D)

Some lawyer bloke.

Katherine smiles knowingly, looks to Cory and then back to farewell Kevin.

KATHERINE

Lawyer, eh?

After a polite exchange of smiles, she and Cory look at each other, her suspicions brewing.

The ute heads off with its cargo.

INT. STOCK SHED - ANOTHER DAY

A clean shed. In a pen, a VETERINARIAN, assisted by Katherine and Cory, does unnatural things to the three ewes.

Katherine's gaze roams from the Vet toward Cory whose eyes remain focussed on the animal proceedings.

A majestic ram in another small pen nearby stands oblivious.

INT. DINING ROOM - NIGHT

The lights are dimmed.

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

On the polished walnut dining table, a soiled dinner setting with a few remains of a meal, a wine glass... all fine china, crystal etc.

There's another similarly used setting on the opposite side of the table.

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, then 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

I didn't think anyone would notice.  
(chooses her words)  
My brother Richard - and me.

Cory waits for elaboration.

KATHERINE (CONT'D)

And his lady friend. Harry Purcell's daughter.

CORY

The sore point?

KATHERINE

The sore point.

CORY

Big plans?

KATHERINE

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

They both lie there in silence a moment.

KATHERINE (CONT'D)

As far as the rest of the world was concerned my brother was simply killed in an accident on a country road - happens regularly.

A moment of solace.

CORY

And the girlfriend?

KATHERINE

Found a job in the city and has never returned - as far as I know.  
(a coda)

Then I told my old man about her - and he never forgave me. A few years after and my mother died.

CORY

Broken heart?

Katherine surreptitiously wipes a lone tear from an eye.

They continue to lie a moment in silence.

CORY (CONT'D)

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, not wanting to push the matter further, leans across to comfort her.

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

KATHERINE (CONT'D)  
He's up to something.

CORY  
Who, Purcell?

KATHERINE  
No - well yeah, perhaps. No, I mean  
Hartmann.

Cory is indifferent to her quandary.

KATHERINE (CONT'D)  
He's got his finger in some sort of  
pie down here.

CORY  
And...?

KATHERINE  
Apparently he's a ratepayer.

INT. SANDSTONE BUILDING - DAY

Katherine approaches the desk of the Stock Agent Ogilvie who  
is on the 'phone. He quickly curtails the call.

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

She smiles a feigned apologetic smile.

KATHERINE  
Maybe next year.

He is an understanding bloke.

KATHERINE (CONT'D)  
You might be able to help. I'm  
intrigued by the fact that our  
Mister Hartmann is one of our  
honourable council members.

OGILVIE  
Nominations are open to all  
ratepayers.

Ever the gentleman he looks at her as if to inveigle her.

OGILVIE (CONT'D)  
Y'know, I reckon the district could benefit from a resident of your background on Council.

KATHERINE  
Yes, "resident"... I was under the impression that Hartmann was not, in fact, a resident of these parts.

OGILVIE  
True. But a ratepayer never-the-less.

Her look begs the question.

OGILVIE (CONT'D)  
He obviously has property in these parts. Somewhere.

Her look begs even more questions.

OGILVIE (CONT'D)  
But I've no idea where. Never given it much thought.

KATHERINE  
So who's been the broker, d'you know?

The Agent shrugs.

KATHERINE (CONT'D)  
The conveyancer?

OGILVIE  
No-one around here. Himself probably. He is a lawyer.

She nods her head most subtly, weighing up this information.

OGILVIE (CONT'D)  
One way to find out.

INT. STUDY - AFTERNOON

Katherine searches the internet. The URL address bar reads  
<http://www.search.asic.gov.au/>

She scribbles notes on a note-pad as she searches this site.

DUSK - LATER

The URL address bar on the computer reads

[http://www.landservices.sa.gov.au/lonline\\_services/20PLB/](http://www.landservices.sa.gov.au/lonline_services/20PLB/)

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 between east of Padthaway.

She scribbles more information on the note-pad, returns to her screen and types into her browser another URL

<http://www.asic.gov.au/search>

NIGHT - LATER

Adorning the wall, dimly lit from a desk lamp below, the old framed aerial survey map of the original Tatiara Park has perimeter highlights of sections of the land - the subtle sound of a laptop keyboard clicks away.

Katherine, competent on the keyboard, mumbles certain of 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 financial status of our operations...

INT. HARTMANN'S CITY OFFICE - DAY

Parchment with "Tatiara Park" letterhead.

Hartmann's face is scarlet with blood pressure as he reads a letter.

KATHERINE (V.O.)

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

He screws up the letter, throws it furiously into the wastepaper basket. He sits a moment, gathers his wits.

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

INT/EXT. CAR TRAVELLING/COUNTRY HIGHWAY - AFTERNOON

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

KATHERINE (V.O.)

...and it has become apparent that your interests might not necessarily be those of Tatiara Park ...In consideration of these circumstances, I therefore advise you... that your services are...

INT. LOUNGE ROOM - ANOTHER NIGHT

Katherine, seated in an old leather lounge chair is unmoved as Hartmann rants and raves.

HARTMANN

No longer required?

KATHERINE

That's correct, Mister Hartmann, You're redundant.

He moves menacingly toward her. She stands to confront him.

HARTMANN

Redundant, Miss Spencer? Perhaps you've forgotten about the arrangement in your father's will. It was his 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.

HARTMANN

It was an arrangement that survives the estate and if you are not going to respect this, then you will need to find a very good lawyer.

She stares him down a moment.

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

That once belonged to 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 (CONT'D)

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

HARTMANN

That, young lady, is none of your business!

KATHERINE

I think it is, as you well know. 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, very good lawyer.

CORY (O.S.)

Shouldn't be too difficult.

Cory stands at the doorway, his presence accentuated by the frame. He holds a small, expertly wrapped gift.

This gets Hartmann's back up; he confronts the younger man.

HARTMANN

Oh, so it's the young pretender is it? Well let me tell you. The old pretender isn't done yet.

KATHERINE

Pretender?

HARTMANN

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

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

CORY

I'm sorry, but that style belongs to others.

Hartmann cannot contain himself any longer.

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 responds in a totally controlled manner, takes a single step into the room, closer to Hartmann.

This is all a bit foreign to Katherine.

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 case ... you know, Land Rights and all that.

Katherine approaches Cory but still keeps her distance and addresses Hartmann.

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 that 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 simply raises his head proudly.

HARTMANN (CONT'D)

You probably know them better as 'boongs'!

SILENCE ...

Katherine senses Hartmann's convictions.

She turns to Cory. He has the appearance of a European.

KATHERINE

Don't be ridiculous. Look at his --

CORY

Don't judge a boong by the colour of the skin. It's the colour of the spirit that counts.

Katherine stares coldly at Cory - a frown appears.

KATHERINE

You could have just told me.

CORY

(he appraises her)  
I am who I am.

She stands mute. A moment to reflect and Cory takes a single, deliberate step towards her.

CORY (CONT'D)

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

He turns his back on them and exits.

In the silence, Katherine stares vacantly at the doorway a moment.

KATHERINE

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

Hartmann fumbles for words.

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 (CONT'D)

I meant no animosity. 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 that affects their investment plans. It's a very real situ --

KATHERINE

(interrupts)

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

Raymond is dumbstruck.

KATHERINE (CONT'D)

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

Embarrassed, Hartmann contrives a chuckle.

KATHERINE (CONT'D)

One way or another, Raymond,, you're going to be a sore and sorry man.

He 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 (CONT'D)

Oh, and I'd keep my distance from  
his kind, if I were you. There's a  
lot you don't know about that mob.

Katherine stands resolute.

EXT. OLD RESTORED STONE HALL - DAY

A sandwich-board sign outside promotes an exhibition of  
aboriginal art.

INT. OLD RESTORED STONE HALL - DAY

The building serves as a modern Library-Resource Centre,  
Gallery and Museum.

On one side of the main hall are stalls with artifacts and  
craft items for sale, which Visitors casually inspect.

A few ante-rooms, modern additions to the original building,  
lead off this wall.

ANTE-ROOM ART GALLERY:

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

She goes to a particular display of journals, diaries and  
other records, written in the hand of various Indigenous  
individuals, dated mid-Nineteenth Century.

A volunteer GUIDE approaches.

KATHERINE

I didn't realize how literate they  
were.

GUIDE

Few white-fellas do. Kept their own  
records of the impact of European  
settlement, particularly with the  
arrival of the wool-growers.

Katherine takes a few moments to digest this. She nods her  
appreciation and, with the Guide following, moves back into

MAIN HALL:

A display devoted to the history of the district since white settlement and the development of the wool-growing industry.

A display of photographs of some of the stately mansions/homesteads in the district, including one of Tatiara Park.

Katherine comes to photographs of various prize stud rams.

GUIDE (CONT'D)

They all seem so unnatural, don't they?

Katherine, viewing one photograph in particular, takes a moment to respond.

KATHERINE

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

GUIDE

Our most famous of all. Sir James.

KATHERINE

Any information?

VOLUNTEER

The Advocate's probably your best bet.

INT. 'BORDER ADVOCATE' OFFICE - DAY

Provincial newspaper office; sparsely decorated, the walls adorned with tabloid teaser sheets dealing with local issues.

Seated at a desk, Katherine is handed a manila folder by ZANE POLLOCK (40s), Editor of the newspaper.

Katherine removes some of the contents - a half a dozen or so black and white photographic negatives and a couple of prints. Together they begin to examine them.

POLLOCK

I couldn't vouch for their clarity.

Katherine comes across a particular negative. Holds it to the light.

The vague definition of a regal ram.

KATHERINE  
Any chance of getting a positive of  
this, blown up a bit?

POLLOCK  
Shouldn't be any problem.

He holds the negative to the light.

POLLOCK (CONT'D)  
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, feigning disinterest; 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 man out of focus in the immediate background.

Katherine leans over to the Editor pointing to the man in  
question.

KATHERINE  
Would you have any idea who this  
is?

He takes the photo and flips it over for Katherine to read.

POLLOCK  
Names should be on the back.

She looks on the reverse side. No names. Disappointed, she  
shakes her head.

Pollock disguises his interest.

Katherine gathers the prints etc together back into the  
manila folder.

KATHERINE  
Look, thanks for that. Been most  
interesting.

POLLOCK  
No problem. If I can help you out  
with any more enquiries?

KATHERINE

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

POLLOCK

Want me to email it?  
(more enthusiastically)  
Maybe drop it over, personally.

KATHERINE

Bit of a drive. No hurry.

Katherine smiles politely, turns and heads for the door.

Pollock watches her exit the office. He stands a moment, cogitating.

Turning his attention back to the manila folder, he re-examines the negative of the ram and becomes transfixed.

He picks up and examines the print that so intrigued Katherine and his attention focuses on the person pointed out by Katherine.

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

2-SHOT PIC: Old Tom and said man.

Pollock flips the photo and reads the notes:

*"Vendor Mr Thomas J Spencer Esq with Mr Raymond Hartmann, agent and broker of the deal"*

Pollock picks up the negative of the ram and takes it to another desk, that of the Staff Photographer.

POLLOCK

D'you reckon you could scan this.  
Get us a couple of copies, blown  
up, say eight by ten?

The Photographer looks at the negative in question, shrugs and nods in the affirmative.

POLLOCK (CONT'D)

Ta.

Pollock returns to his desk, wakes his computer and Googles a search ... a Beat... consulting the screen, he dials on his mobile. While waiting, he flips through the rest of the material in the manila folder and comes across a newspaper clipping with a photo of a car wreck.

POLLOCK (CONT'D)  
 (sotto voce)  
 'Mister Richard Spencer...'

The other party answers the phone.

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

EXT. HOMESTEAD - VERANDAH - AFTERNOON - LATER

THE FRONT STEPS:

Katherine, mounts the front steps, goes to the Front Door. An envelope awaits her, sitting on the huge polished red-gum threshold.

She opens it. It is written in a handsome hand on quality stock:

THE LETTER BEGINS:

*Dear Ms Spencer, It is with regret that I put pen to paper. However, I am dictated by circumstances.*

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

CORY (V.O.)  
*"I'm not sure how your father would respond. Obviously he was 'impressed' by my credentials, to which, incidentally, you have yet to be privy. Be that as it may, I believe it is customary to offer one month... In the meantime I will attend to my duties as duty demands.*

Katherine stares a moment beyond the sheet of paper.

She resumes her reading.

CORY (V.O.)  
*"You said once, that perhaps there were some things about me you don't know but ought to. Obviously what you have learnt about me does not sit well with you.*

(MORE)

CORY (V.O.) (CONT'D)

*Should you find out more, let me know, for I am as ignorant as you. Indeed, this was the reason for my return to Tatiara Park. Not to lay claim to it but to find my place in it. I left this land as a young lad, innocent of the ways of white-fellas. I shall, unfortunately, depart again very little the wiser."*

She sits and muses a moment, the letter limp in her hand.

A small, older sedan drives up alongside the homestead.

Audrey exits the sedan, ambles around to the verandah, sees Katherine's vacant look.

Katherine stands and moves off to her own vehicle, handing the letter to Audrey as she passes.

KATHERINE

I never realized it was him.

EXT. SHEARING SHED - DUSK

Katherine mopes around the shed. She enters the main door.

INT. SHEARING SHED - DAY

ANOTHER TIME - CIRCA EARLY-MID 1980s:

SHEARERS, totally focussed, tackle the mob.

YOUNG KATHERINE (about 5 years old) plays hide'n'seek with her brother YOUNG RICHARD (about 12 years old) among the bales of wool.

She finds a hiding spot, out of sight of her brother. She sits there quietly, amusing herself 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 BOY (about 8 years old), with an olive complexion.

The Young Boy smiles a blushing smile.

He is joined by an adult male, a half cast Aboriginal, who beckons the lad to depart the scene. Reluctantly but obediently, the lad complies.

Young Katherine sits in her hiding spot, pondering the lad's departure.

She is jolted back to reality with the surprise slap on the wrist by Richard.

YOUNG RICHARD (CONT'D)

It!

She looks back toward the Young Boy who looks back at her... and disappears.

EXT. COTTAGE - DAY - PRESENT

Katherine knocks on the front door. No answer. She peers through the window, tests the lock on the door. It opens and she enters.

INT. COTTAGE - DAY

On the floor of the Main Room are a number of unsealed cartons filled with books etc.

Katherine takes a cursory look at some of the books, mostly legal tomes.

She moves toward a doorway to another room, a bedroom, and looks inside.

The bed is made, the room is spotless and tidy.

She pulls the door closed and turns to be drawn, as if to a magnet, to the ram's skull and horns mounted above the shotgun resting on the mantle-piece.

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

A BRAND:

"TIT-SRJ" burned into the spiral horn.

Gingerly, she replaces the skull in its rightful place, as if returning some sacred chalice to the altar,

She takes one final survey of the room and departs.

INT. HOMESTEAD - DAY

HALLWAY:

Katherine enters the front door of the homestead, walks along the hall toward the stairs, throws her car keys on the console table.

They drape themselves over Cory's gift.

She picks up the gift and removes the wrapping. A small cardboard package - inside are two port glasses.

She removes one of the glasses and gives it a delicate flick with her index finger. It PINGS the ping of superior crystal.

INT. LOUNGE ROOM - DAY - CONTINUOUS

Katherine takes the glasses to a crystal decanter of port wine on a silver tray on a sideboard. But her face contorts as she grips the glasses tightly.

She turns toward the fire-place, raises one of the glasses in a throwing motion but is interrupted by the TOOT of a car horn outside.

Deflated, she replaces the glass on the tray.

INT. STUDY - DAY

AN ENLARGED BLACK AND WHITE PRINT:

The head of a regal looking ram, its spiral horns conspicuous. A marking - what appears to be very much like a burnt-in branding, is evident on one of the horns.

This photo is allowed to drop, revealing

ANOTHER ENLARGED BLACK AND WHITE PRINT:

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

This photo, too, is allowed to drop, revealing

A THIRD ENLARGED PHOTO:

Old Tom and the Younger Hartmann.

POLLOCK (O.S.)  
Raymond Hartmann. You know the man?

KATHERINE:

Holding the photograph, she nods her head.

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

POLLOCK (CONT'D)  
Apparently he did the legals for a deal between your father and some Commie investors back in nineteen eighty-seven. Before it went to auction. Managed to convince them to pay a lot of money for your father's ram... called, er...

Katherine picks up the pic of the ram, looks intently at it.

KATHERINE  
"Sir James".

POLLOCK  
That's right. Seems the chinks had invested in another property somewhere up in the mid-north where Sir James was meant to do wonders. 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.

POLLOCK (CONT'D)  
As for the animal, no records of where it went. Makes you wonder.

KATHERINE  
You're pretty suspicious aren't you?

POLLOCK  
Newspaper man. Not hard to smell a story.

Katherine declines to encourage him.

POLLOCK (CONT'D)  
I mean, why else would you want the  
photos?

Katherine smiles non-convincingly.

KATHERINE  
Sentimental.

POLLOCK  
Looks like a lotta sentiment to me.

And he smiles most convincingly.

THE HALLWAY:

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

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

Katherine, holding 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.

The SOUND of a car driving off.

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 and continues her dusting.

Katherine fondles the photograph and withdraws to the Study.

INT. CAR TRAVELLING - COUNTRY HIGHWAY - AFTERNOON

Pollock drives one-handed, a broad, smug smile as he waits for his smart phone to be answered.

INT. EXCLUSIVE CLUB - DAY

Hartmann lunches with a salacious young BIMBO when his smart phone rings.

OTHERS in the dining room are annoyed at this intrusion into their exclusive retreat.

He apologizes insincerely to his companion, excuses himself and answers the phone.

HARTMANN

Yeah, this is he. Good, good. So what seems to be your problem?

His mood changes on hearing the other party continue - he becomes downright flummoxed.

HARTMANN (CONT'D)

Yes, I know the young lady...

He listens intently to the other party.

He slowly removes the phone from his ear.

BIMBO

Bad news?

The MAITRE D', with a stern look, arrives and stands alongside Hartmann.

With a surly smile, Hartmann switches his phone off.

He stands abruptly, throws some folding currency on the table for the Bimbo.

HARTMANN

Grab a cab.

INT. CAR TRAVELLING - COUNTRY HIGHWAY - DAY

Pollock closes his phone, tosses it on the passenger seat. His smug smile slowly gives way to a look of near euphoria. He grabs his phone again and scrolls down the screen.

A succession of three huge trucks laden with construction equipment gushes past in the other direction. The vortex almost forces Pollock off the road. He drops his phone and pulls to a stop on the side of the road.

He regains composure and makes his call.

INT. CITY EDITOR'S OFFICE - DAY - INTERCUT

The editor, DICK CHRUGHTON (late 40s), in his glass cell of an office, snatches up his ringing desk phone.

CHRUGHTON

What?!

(listens impatiently)

...better be a biggie...

(even more impatient)

...vaguely remember. Yeah, yeah, licks a few arses at the Old Boys' Club... Bit of a Bondie, Skase type...

(less impatient now)

... What d'you mean "lucrative"?

POLLOCK

I mean like a world record price.

CHRUGHTON

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 after that.

CHRUGHTON

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

POLLOCK

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

CHRUGHTON

Then you'd better find out why.

POLLOCK

I'm on to it. And you'll be the first, promise. I'll keep you posted. Oh, and I might have another exclusive for you. Cheers.

Pollock closes his phone momentarily, looks over his shoulder in the direction of the disappearing trucks... A Beat ... he punches a new number into his mobile phone.

His call is answered.

POLLOCK (CONT'D)

Listen, I'm gonna be gone for a while. I'm gonna check out some real estate... and some interesting machinery. Might be another story. ...Oh and, see if you can do some more background on this Hartmann bloke's other business interests.

He terminates the call and switches on a maps app on his dashboard media display.

He looks carefully for traffic, a check of the rear vision mirror.

Pollock's car pulls from the verge back on to the country highway, does a rapid U-turn and speeds off.

INT. STUDY - AFTERNOON

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

Furrows appear on her forehead.

She fidgets - classic displacement activity.

Audrey watches her from the doorway

AUDREY

If it's history you're after you might try your father's old room.

It's a suggestion that irks Katherine. Audrey leaves to cogitate.

INT. OLD TOM'S BEDROOM - AFTERNOON

Katherine stands at the doorway to the unchanged room.

She enters and moves furtively around the space.

Katherine picks up the photo, of a Woman (30s) taken circa 1970, blows away some of the dust, replaces it.

She opens the drawer of the what-not, rummages, picks up a set of rosary beads. She deftly works her way along them with one hand. She replaces the beads on top of a well-worn Bible.

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, starts at the sight.

Grasping the spiral horns, she removes a ghostly white skull of a long deceased ram, holds it before her at arms length. She slowly turns the object around to get a full appraisal. There is a brand burnt into the back of one of the horns.

THE BRAND:

"TAT-SRJ"

INT. KITCHEN - AFTERNOON

Audrey does menial cleaning at the bench-top.

KATHERINE (O.S.)

I don't know why, but I sense this is quite a bit of history. What do you think?

Audrey turns, freezes.

Katherine at the door holds the ram's skull.

Audrey tries as best she can to disguise her uneasiness.

AUDREY

Looks like an old --

KATHERINE

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

She muses a moment giving the skull serious inspection.

KATHERINE (CONT'D)

(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

Some sort of brand? Put it on all the sheep, didn't they?

KATHERINE

No, only on those of some significance - some value. But it'd be nice to know the meaning of "TAT-SRJ".

AUDREY

(cautiously)

Don't know - it's probably just one of hundreds of skulls lying around.

Audrey busies herself re-wiping the same spot over and over. Katherine picks up on this.

KATHERINE

(challenging)

Not like this one. Maybe one other.

EXT. COTTAGE - DAY

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

INT. STUDY - AFTERNOON

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 book. This label reads - 'Sales 1980-90'

She runs a finger down a page. Flicks over another page. In each entry are various combinations of letters - a reference index. In each case the reference letters begin with "TAT".

She flicks another page and comes across the entry for the sale of "Sir James" and the combination of letters:

"TAT-SRJ".

EXT. STABLES - AFTERNOON

Katherine prepares her steed.

EXT. COTTAGE - AFTERNOON

Katherine knocks forcefully once on the front door. There is no answer. Without even trying the lock, she opens the door and enters.

INT. COTTAGE - AFTERNOON

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

The shotgun rests on the mantle-piece but the chimney above it is bare. She quickly surveys the room and moves into

CORY'S BEDROOM: - CONTINUOUS

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 - CONTINUOUS

Katherine goes haphazardly from carton to carton. She indiscriminately wrenches the sealing tape from one of the larger ones and opens it. It contains only books. She goes to another carton ... Again full of books...

EXT. COTTAGE - AFTERNOON

Katherine exits the cottage. She goes to her horse but has difficulty mounting. She is uneasy as she looks around the place. She focusses and trots off.

INT. KITCHEN - AFTERNOON

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

Audrey moves quickly into the Kitchen and answers the phone.

AUDREY  
Tatiara Park...

On hearing the caller's voice, her face drops, finds the words difficult ...

AUDREY (CONT'D)  
No... she's not in... no, I don't  
know!... I don't want...  
(MORE)

AUDREY (CONT'D)

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, stands a moment in a quandary.

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

A smart phone is flopped on to the passenger seat and the vehicle rapidly accelerates.

EXT. RURAL BACK ROAD - AFTERNOON

An image on a smartphone screen - the subject matter, the three trucks assembled near the existing rig, in a compound, obscured by hessian burlap strung over chain-link fencing.

Pollock in his car at the same site where Old Tom had his accident, checks the image, disappointed. He takes more shots, jots notes in a small notebook.

He watches a while longer before he starts the vehicle and slowly moves off.

INT/EXT. CAR TRAVELLING - LATE AFTERNOON

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

Another vehicle, a 4-WD speeds recklessly towards him in the opposite direction.

Pollock strains to see the identity of the driver, 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.

He turns off the main highway, and cruises the outskirts of town, the odd lower income residence here and there.

INT. 'BORDER ADVOCATE' OFFICE - LATE AFTERNOON

Pollock at his desk, downloads the photos from his phone to his computer.

The rest of the office is closing down for the day, the Office ASSISTANT bids farewell.

Pollock calls back over his shoulder to another JOURNALIST still at his desk.

POLLOCK  
What d'you make of all this?

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

JOURNALIST  
Don't know but looks very  
secretive.

POLLOCK  
Like some big construction going  
on. There haven't been any  
announcements that I know of.

JOURNALIST  
Nah, me neither.

He wanders back to his desk, leaving pollock to speculate.

POLLOCK  
You get anymore for me on Hartmann?

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

POLLOCK  
Kerogen?

JOURNALIST  
Sounds right.

Pollock stares at the screen a beat... he snaps up the land-line 'phone and dials.

POLLOCK  
(to Journo as he waits)  
I've got a feeling he just headed  
toward...  
(into phone)  
Raymond Hartmann? ...left about  
three hours ago?... Not to worry.  
Thanks.

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

INT. KITCHEN - LATE AFTERNOON

A distraught Audrey nurses a cup of tea at the table. A vehicle screeches to a halt on the gravel outside. A look of dread. She rushes to the phone and dials.

A nervous wait before the call is answered.

AUDREY

Brian?

INT/EXT. POLICE PANEL VAN - LATE AFTERNOON

The SERGEANT at the wheel, passenger Father Jameison, guns the vehicle, lights flashing through the main street of town.

INT/EXT. 'BORDER ADVOCATE' OFFICE - SAME

The Journalist stands at the window facing the street, sipping a stubbie of beer.

JOURNALIST

Christ. He's in a hurry!

Pollock looks up from the computer screen.

POLLOCK

What's that?

JOURNALIST

Cops. With a Priest in custody.

Pollock moves swiftly to the window.

JOURNALIST (CONT'D)

Obviously on a mission --

But Pollock is gone.

EXT. SCRUBLAND - LATE AFTERNOON

Katherine on horseback at a casual trot checks out the immediate surroundings.

INT/EXT. CAR TRAVELLING - LATE AFTERNOON

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

EXT. CAVERN - LATE AFTERNOON

Katherine on her colt slowly approaches the entrance to the cavern, a spooked look in the horse's eyes.

EXT. HOMESTEAD - LATE AFTERNOON

Hartmann rips off his tie as he hurriedly exits the homestead, enters his 4-WD and speeds off, gravel flying.

EXT. CAVERN - LATE AFTERNOON

Katherine dismounts her horse and tentatively enters.

INT. CAVERN - LATE AFTERNOON - CONTINUOUS

Katherine treads cautiously in the minimal light. She comes to the remains of the camp fire, the spent ashes.

A soft SHUFFLING sound wakens Katherine from her reverie. She turns.

Cory sits unobtrusively on a small mound a few metres away.

Katherine's eyes brighten. She hesitates momentarily before approaching to sit beside him.

He refrains from looking at her.

KATHERINE  
You going walkabout?

He raises his eyes and gives her a deep understanding look.

KATHERINE (CONT'D)  
I thought we were making plans for  
this place?

He averts her eyes, looks at the ground.

KATHERINE (CONT'D)  
Big mistake, eh?  
(...A PAUSE...)  
I went to the cottage...

She stares at him.

KATHERINE (CONT'D)  
...looking for something...

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

KATHERINE (CONT'D)  
Thought I might find your... your  
souvenir with the regal horns.

He remains with his back to her.

KATHERINE (CONT'D)  
Very similar to another one I just  
found.

This time he half turns to her.

KATHERINE (CONT'D)  
In the old man's room.  
Coincidental? I mean I know lots of  
people collect them - but I suspect  
it's a bit more than that.

Again he turns away from her.

KATHERINE (CONT'D)  
Saw yours wasn't on the fireplace  
anymore. Thought maybe you'd packed  
it away.

Still without turning.

CORY  
It's gone - for good.

KATHERINE  
Along with the story behind it?

Now he turns to confront her.

CORY  
Not much of a story.

KATHERINE  
Enlighten me.

He moves to a flat rock outcrop and sits.

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

CORY  
I was only a lad when for no  
apparent reason we had to pack up  
and leave. Not that it made a lot  
of difference to me at the time.  
But my old man was never the same.  
He had plans to get himself some  
land. Encouraged me to take an  
interest in it.

He surveys his surroundings. Her eyes are on him.

CORY (CONT'D)  
Ended up moving to the mid-north.

KATHERINE  
The mid-north? Why there?

CORY  
Good question. Anyway, a few years after, he gave me a letter and said that one day I should return to Tatiara.

KATHERINE  
Your "good reference"?

CORY  
(nods)  
Said it was the country where I belonged and that I'd know when the time was right. And then he simply disappeared from the face of the earth. Everyone said he went 'walkabout'. I never saw him again. I read that letter over and over but I never found out the whole truth.

KATHERINE  
And your mother?

CORY  
She died a year after we moved. She was frowned upon - because of me.

Katherine looks enquiringly at him.

CORY (CONT'D)  
Shame job! Wrong colour - you know how it is!

She shakes her head ever so subtly in empathy.

CORY (CONT'D)  
She had a sister somewhere around here but I never met her.

KATHERINE  
But why the sudden departure?

CORY

Not sure. What I do know is that my dad was a witness to something he shouldn't have been.

Katherine is all ears.

CORY (CONT'D)

Back in the eighties. No doubt you know about Sir James, world record price and all that?

She moves closer toward him.

KATHERINE

I know what everybody else seems to know.

She sits next to him.

CORY

There was an indiscretion apparently. Immediately after the sale, the ram, with the approval of the new buyers, was retained for some months at Tatiara until insurance was finalized.

KATHERINE

And who was responsible for that, I wonder?

CORY

My guess is --

KATHERINE

Hartmann? Bless his heart.

This sparks something in Cory.

CORY

Hart in name only.

KATHERINE

Oh, I don't know. Seems to have taken a shine for me.

Suddenly the beam of a torchlight plays upon her face.

Shielding their eyes, they turn to the source of the light and the GLINT of a pistol.

KATHERINE (CONT'D)

Hart - How did you --?

HARTMANN

Dear little Audrey. But her lips  
are sealed.

He shines the torch all about.

HARTMANN (CONT'D)

So now this is just our little  
secret.

Shielding her eyes from the light, Katherine stands to  
confront him.

KATHERINE

What do you mean her lips -- ?

HARTMANN

Another story.

Katherine takes another step forward. He steadies the gun.

HARTMANN (CONT'D)

Tsch, tsch. Should've stayed in  
Melbourne, my dear, instead of  
coming here playing detective -  
getting involved in men's business.

Hartmann, playing the torch and pistol on them, approaches  
menacingly.

HARTMANN (CONT'D)

Never would take your old man's  
advice, would you!

Cory stands and, shielding his eyes, instinctively moves  
slightly in front of Katherine's side. But she moves from his  
protective stance to maintain her confrontation.

KATHERINE

So, tell me about this  
"indiscretion".

HARTMANN

Sir James 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

And you sent another instead?

HARTMANN

A simple case of 'TIT' for 'TAT'.  
Let's face it. To most people they  
all look the same, especially the  
chinks. They couldn't tell one gene  
from another back then.

CORY

But I gather my father was privy to  
their scam?

KATHERINE

"Their"?

HARTMANN

Oh, yes. Let's not forget Old Tom.  
It really wasn't all that hard to  
convince him.

KATHERINE

(not convinced)

He may have been a prick but --

HARTMANN

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

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

HARTMANN (CONT'D)

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 (CONT'D)

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 (CONT'D)

No no. Your dumb sheep are grazing on land that offers something much more valuable. The world couldn't give a fuck about running out of wool. It's worried about running out of oil. This place is sitting on top of one massive seam of Kerogen.

Means nothing to his two hostages.

HARTMANN (CONT'D)

Shale! - all saturated with 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 suspect it was blackmail. 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 --

Cory takes a step toward Hartmann who brandishes his weapon more menacingly, stopping him in his tracks.

HARTMANN (CONT'D)

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

CORY

What do you know about --?

HARTMANN

Wasn't content with his compensation pay-out for old Tom's indiscretions with the animal, was he? I tried to talk sense into him - but he was a victim of misadventure. Looks like I'll have to arrange another.

Cory makes another move toward him but Katherine restrains him.

HARTMANN (CONT'D)

(addresses Katherine)

And as for you young lady. You give me no choice. Time to put an end to this chapter once and for all. 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.

Anticipating their fate, Katherine rugby tackles Cory back to the safety of a rocky outcrop, just as Hartmann fires - but he's no gunslinger and the recoil unbalances him.

Cory intimates they retreat further into the cavern, into the darkness.

Hartmann ventures tentatively deeper into the cavern, past his hiding prey.

Cory and Katherine steal away toward the cavern opening.

Cory slips, almost tumbles into a deep breach. Katherine, very athletic, 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 tentatively toward Hartmann.

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

He stirs, picks up his torch and again captures his prey in its light. He retrieves his pistol, fires in their direction. The shots ricochet off stalagmites and stalactites.

The weapon clicks repeatedly - no more rounds.

Katherine and Cory make good their escape, leaving Hartmann yelling abuse.

HARTMANN (CONT'D)

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

EXT. CAVERN - LATE AFTERNOON

Cory and Katherine exit the cave. They rush over to Hartmann's '*Kerogen Developments*' 4-WD, some thirty metres away, look inside for the keys but they are not there.

Cory lifts the bonnet, stands confused by the layout.

Katherine does a quick recon of the surroundings.

KATHERINE

Must have wandered off when he arrived!

Cory looks toward her.

CORY

What's that?

KATHERINE

I rode here - couldn't be too far.

She goes in search.

Cory slams the bonnet down. He looks up from his endeavour.

Hartmann holds his wounded side as he staggers to the cave opening.

Katherine on her mount, approaches Cory, yelling.

KATHERINE (CONT'D)

There's room for two.

Cory runs toward Katherine and in true cowboy style, with a helping hand from her, mounts the horse and they head off.

He grabs for his mobile phone from its little leather holster but it is no longer there.

CORY  
Damn. Lost my phone.

KATHERINE  
No reception, remember?

CORY  
Touché.

Hartmann manages to get into his 4-WD and starts off after the other two.

INT/EXT. 4-WD - TRAVELLING - LATE AFTERNOON

Hartmann drives recklessly. He manages to remove a few extra rounds from the glove box and reload his pistol.

EXT. SCRUBLAND - LATE AFTERNOON

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

Hartmann shoots sporadically, to no avail.

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 bushes 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 at a trot.

They stop dead in their tracks, confronted by the 4-WD lurking ahead.

A momentary stand-off.

KATHERINE  
This is it!

Katherine digs her heels in, her mount responds, Cory holds firmly as the rider takes charge.

Immediately, the 4-WD responds, accelerates, powers towards the riders.

CORY  
(yelling, 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-dried creek bed, flanked by robust red gums.

KATHERINE (CONT'D)  
I never knew this was here!

CORY  
You should go walkabout now and again.

Hartmann's 4-WD pulls up on the ridge above the creek-bed, watching his prey escaping. He belts the vehicle into reverse.

He speeds off at something of a tangent, disappears in a cloud of dust.

EXT. SHEARERS' QUARTERS - LATE AFTERNOON

Katherine and Cory a few hundred metres from the Shearers' Quarters. The horse sweats profusely, totally exhausted.

CORY  
The cottage. There's a 'phone.

The thunder of the 4-WD approaching on their flank.

KATHERINE  
And a shotgun.

But Hartmann cuts off their route to the cottage.

CORY  
Bastard!

Cory slips off the rump of the horse, yelling.

CORY (CONT'D)  
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 together make their way to the entrance to the building. It is padlocked. Cory's solid boot soon has it open.

INT. SHEARERS' QUARTERS - LATE AFTERNOON - CONTINUOUS

Cory slides the inside bolt and secures the door behind them; they lean against the wall of the central Common Room, at each end of which are small dorm-type rooms.

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 following.

Suddenly a shot SPLINTERS through the wooden doorway.

HARTMANN (O.S.)

Hope there's still some tucker  
lying around there. I've got all  
day - and night.

He FIRES another shot that also splinters through the door.

CORY

(flippant)

He has a point. The back door?

Together they slip away to the back door, to one side of the fire-box, slide the bolt and escape.

EXT. SHEARERS' QUARTERS - LATE AFTERNOON - CONTINUOUS

Hartmann goes cautiously to one of the windows facing the verandah. He peers through.

He moves further along the verandah to another of the windows and peers through to see the open back door and, in the distance, Katherine and Cory making good their escape.

EXT. SHEARING SHED - LATE AFTERNOON - CONTINUOUS

Hand in hand, Katherine and Cory race towards a general entrance door.

CORY  
Don't tell me... locked?

KATHERINE  
Probably.

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.

He leads her under the building which stands on squat timber stilts.

Ignoring her protestations, he drags Katherine with him and they slither underneath to a particular spot. Cory probes around above his head and eventually locates a couple of short lengths of loose floorboards.

CORY  
This was my playground when I was a kid, remember? Where I amused myself.

He forces up the loose boards and they clamber inside the building.

Cory replaces the floorboards and with Katherine seeks shelter among the stack of wool bales.

CORY (CONT'D)  
Do you think you can make it to the cottage? I'll take care of him.

KATHERINE  
(in the negative)  
No heroics.

There is scuffling below them. Cory drags one of the bales toward the area of the loose floor boards.

It is no easy task. Katherine assists and they topple the bale to secure the boards.

SILENCE...

Katherine looks around the place.

KATHERINE (CONT'D)  
 Maybe the loading bay?

In one wall, a tall, wide sliding door.

CORY  
 If I can get his attention.

Cory stomps heavily on the floor boards well away from the direction of the sliding door as Katherine stealthily moves toward them.

The glass in one of the few windows shatters and a shot is fired toward Katherine, grazing her wrist, foiling her attempt.

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 cottage...

Another shot thuds into a bale. Katherine appraises the situation. Ignoring her own minor wound, she drags Cory to a nook between some of the bales at floor level, big enough and dim enough to secrete a man.

With effort, she rips a sleeve off her shirt, forms a wad and rams it into his 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 and 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...

The door is kicked open. Hartmann in the doorway, throws the gun away.

He moves surreptitiously to the wall and 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 open doorway.

Katherine stealthily scales the bales, stacked three high. To one side, the sliding door but there is a sheer drop of some four metres to the floor below. She stops and appraises the situation again.

She peers over the bales for a glimpse of Hartmann.

He spies her.

Hampered by his injury, with shears in hand, he begins to climb up after her as best he can.

HARTMANN

(breathless)

Shoulda known better than to come  
messin' in men's business. In case  
you haven't worked it out, there's  
something else you should know  
about your Mister Hamilton.

Katherine squeezes between the bale he is climbing and the one behind her. With all her might, she heaves against the front bale, dislodging it.

Hartmann, halfway up the stack of bales, loses his balance. With the shears in one hand he grabs desperately at the teetering bale with the other.

With its centre of gravity thrown out of kilter, the 140 kilogram bale tumbles toward the floor and pins Hartmann underneath.

His legs kick frantically, quiver, stop dead.

Katherine clamours from the stack of bales, jumps to the floor, looks to the sliding door.

Hartmann lays motionless, blood gathering in globules on the lanolin surface of the 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 is void of life.

Katherine struggles to roll the bale over. She turns Hartmann's body over. His chest is impaled by the shears, still in his firm grasp.

KATHERINE  
(mutters)  
Dangerous in the wrong hands.

A GUTTURAL COUGH from Cory. She rushes back to him, eases him out on to the floor, cradles his head on her lap.

KATHERINE (CONT'D)  
You never did join in, did you?

CORY  
(final gasp)  
You never asked...

She leans down and kisses his forehead. She refuses to cry.

EXT. SHEARING SHED - LATE AFTERNOON

Katherine, struggles as she carries Cory's leaden body from the building and heads towards his cottage.

Two vehicles approach like contenders in the Dakar rally.

The leading car SCREECHES to a halt. Pollock quickly alights.

Through the dust he rushes to Katherine.

POLLOCK  
Heard the shots. Turned out to be a  
real biggie I see.

Katherine looks to his car - she is more concerned with one of his two passengers, Audrey, her face badly bruised, being supported by Father Jameison.

KATHERINE  
(referring to Audrey's  
bruises)  
He won't ever do that again.

She drops to her knees, cradles Cory.

Amid the dust, the Police van screeches to a halt. The SERGEANT rushes to Cory's corpse.

SERGEANT  
Who did this?

Katherine gestures in the direction of the Shearing Shed and the Sergeant, weapon drawn, officiously heads off to the building.

Katherine cradles Cory's head in her lap. Audrey shakes her head in commiseration.

AUDREY  
Cory, sweet boy.

KATHERINE  
We had plans.

AUDREY  
(pitiful)  
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.

Father Jameison stands piously alongside Audrey. She looks back to Pollock's car, whispers something in the priest's ear. He shakes his head.

Katherine looks from one to the other.

FR JAMEISON  
(pleading to Audrey)  
I can't. I promised the old man.

AUDREY  
The old man's dead, for Christ's sake!

FR JAMEISON  
I tried to warn her.

AUDREY  
Did you tell her outright?!

FR JAMEISON  
I've taken vows, Audrey. Holy vows.

AUDREY  
 (looks to Cory)  
 They mean nothing to him.

The Priest stands mute.

KATHERINE  
 (pleading)  
 What?

AUDREY  
 (to Fr Jameison)  
 I'm not asking you as a Father.  
 Tell her --

KATHERINE  
 Tell me what?

AUDREY  
 -- or I will.

Father Jameison considers just who is the higher authority then addresses Katherine as if his whole world was about to fall apart

FR JAMEISON  
 Cory... Cory was...

KATHERINE  
 Aboriginal?

The Priest struggles for more words...

AUDREY  
 (interceding)  
 Was your father's son!

Pollock, scribbling this down on his note-pad, repeats

POLLOCK  
 "...her father's son..."

Shock sets in. Audrey sinks painfully to her knees alongside Katherine and the corpse. She watches as the last of Cory's blood weeps from his mouth, mixes with that from Katherine's cradling wrist and drops to soak the soil below.

AUDREY  
 After Richard was born your mother experienced, shall we say, difficulties. Your father, with his Irish Catholic upbringing, would not be denied. There were a number of indiscretions --

Katherine mouths "... a number..."

AUDREY (CONT'D)

One with Cory's mother. I watched him take her, followed them - to the cave. I gave him an ultimatum. If he didn't confess, I'd tell your mother. He confessed.

(looks to Fr Jameison)

And then it was out of my hands and into those of God.

(to Katherine)

But then, a few years later --

KATHERINE

I came along.

Katherine comforts Cory's head even closer to her chest.

AUDREY

Obviously Hartmann found out, though God only knows how.

(nods toward shearing shed)

We'll never know.

Pollock continues his reporting...

INT. CITY EDITOR'S OFFICE - LATE AFTERNOON

Chrington at his desk reads a proof of the front page of the tabloid 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".

INSERT:

Hartmann and a Chinese buyer pose with a regal merino ram.

RESUME CHRINGTON:

CHRINGTON (CONT'D)

There was no reason to suspect an indiscretion. No reason for the Tatiara Park stud, with its world-wide reputation, to be questioned.

(MORE)

CHRIGHTON (CONT'D)

The question that does remain  
to be answered is 'Why?'".

EXT. CHAPEL - DAY

Pollock, small recorder in hand, sits with Audrey on a garden bench outside the chapel.

AUDREY

Perfect grounds for serious  
blackmail naturally. He devised the  
scam with the ram and convinced the  
old man that it was foolproof. I  
presume they shared the profits.  
Plus, he managed to have quite a  
bit of land signed over to him with  
very little paper trail. Obviously  
hadn't counted on Katherine  
returning.

INT. CITY EDITOR'S OFFICE - LATE AFTERNOON

Chrighton continues to quote from proof of the front page of  
the tabloid ...

CHRIGHTON

"The downturn in the market for  
natural fibres was not yet in full  
swing.

With all parties now dearly  
departed, one can only speculate.  
Perhaps greed. The bane of any  
civilized society.

Now, with the discovery of  
shale, would the whole region  
change forever?

INSERT:

Chrighton's dialogue continues over - Katherine, being  
interviewed by Pollock mouths (MUTE): "*Not while I own  
Tatiara Park.*"

RESUME CHRIGHTON:

CHRIGHTON (CONT'D)

"'Not while I own Tatiara Park',  
said Ms Spencer.

(MORE)

CHRIGHTON (CONT'D)

However, nearly four decades on,  
there remains the issue of  
compensation for the Chinese  
government.

It could spell the complete  
demise of the once powerful Tatiara  
Park dynasty."

EXT. CHAPEL - DAY

Pollock, recorder in hand, continues interviewing Audrey.

POLLOCK

So, Ms Jameison, who else knew  
about the other matter back then?

AUDREY

The other --?

POLLOCK

The deceased, Mister Hamilton?

AUDREY

My brother.

Audrey peers over her shoulder to Father Jameison, looking to  
the heavens, fumbling with his rosary beads.

POLLOCK

The local priest?

AUDREY

Through the confessional. He  
couldn't bring himself to betray  
the confidence. Maybe all this  
could have been sorted if he had. A  
few lives saved - if not souls.  
Misplaced loyalty!

INT. CITY EDITOR'S OFFICE - DAY

Editor Chrighton folds the mock-up of the front page. 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 flops the paper on to the desk, turns to Pollock, sitting on the edge of the desk.

CHRIGHTON (CONT'D)

Now what've you got on this fracking business?

EXT. SMALL FAMILY GRAVEYARD - DAY

The Mourners are gathered at the grave-site at the rear of the chapel.

All except Audrey have distanced themselves from Katherine, this time in traditional black.

Father Jameison labours over the final words of the eulogy, his sincerity struggling with his conscience.

FR JAMEISON

...and we commend his soul to the highest judge...  
(dialogue fades)

From a short distance, an elderly aboriginal woman, Auntie, observes proceedings.

The gathering disperses from the grave-site -- all, that is, except Katherine.

With the other white-fellas departed, Auntie approaches.

She walks to the open grave, picks up a sod of dirt and tosses it on the casket below.

AUNTIE

You back where you belong, young fella. In Tatiara, good country.

She steps back to Katherine's side. She links an arm through Katherine's who reciprocates by bringing her hand up to take hold of Auntie's hand, black with white, confirming a kinship of sorts.

THE END