

'GOOD COUNTRY' – PITCH

By Jeff McMahon

Logline: *When an heiress to her estranged family's ailing wool-growing dynasty investigates the cause of its demise, she unwittingly causes the death of her lover – who is more than he appears to be.*

'Good Country' is set in 2019 in a region of south-east South Australia against a backdrop of a contentious issue in rural communities viz, the conflict associated with the encroachment of oil fracking on the agricultural industry.

The Protagonist, Katherine Spencer, successful, thirty-seven-year-old, marketing executive in Melbourne, is summoned, after a twenty-year absence, to the family's rural property, Tatiara Park, to reconcile with her estranged father, now on his death bed. On inheriting the property, she soon discovers that the once thriving wool-growing dynasty has steadily declined over the years.

Opting for a career change, Katherine undertakes to bring about the property's renaissance. To this end she enlists the assistance of the manager, Cory Hamilton, two years her senior and, curiously, only recently hired by her late father. But what starts as a business relationship, soon develops into an intimately personal one, much to the chagrin of the long-time family lawyer, Raymond Hartmann, who has his own agenda – and history.

It soon becomes evident that the affairs of the property have been stuck in the twentieth century. Reviewing the old-fashioned ledgers, the only records available, and in taking stock of her assets, she identifies anomalies concerning the diminished size of the family's once extensive landholdings. She determines to find out to whom the land has gone, and under what circumstances. Seems that much of Tatiara Park has been purchased by Hartmann for a song, the last parcel transacted a mere week before her father's death.

Convinced of a conflict of interest, Katherine severs all ties with Hartmann, despite (if not in spite of) her late father's wishes.

Hartmann, however, will not go quietly. Being privy to Cory's backstory, he contrives to remove him from the scene. He confronts the lovers and discloses Cory's indigenous heritage, alleging a planned land rights claim by him over Tatiara Park. Previously unaware of Cory's background, Katherine is forced to question the sincerity of her emotions and reconcile her latent racial prejudices.

But when Cory proffers his resignation, she finds she cannot dismiss him completely from her heart. Nor can she ignore her conviction that he is integral to the scheme of things at Tatiara Park; and that his late parents might have taken secrets with them to the grave. Atoning for her racial prejudice, she sets out to

learn more of the culture of the indigenous people of 'the good country', the Potaruwutj nation, particularly since the arrival of the woolgrowers.

Enlisting the archival services of the regional newspaper, she unearths particulars of a world record sale price of a prize ram, paid to Tatiara Park by a communist Chinese syndicate some three decades earlier – not so much a deal as a scam, brokered by none other than Raymond Hartmann. A Pandora's box is opened, exposing a plethora of malefactions implicating an intricate web of players, with Hartmann the common denominator.

For decades, it seems, everyone played into Hartmann's hands as he set about achieving his objective – to take control of the entire region, not for what grows upon the rich fertile land but rather for the mineral wealth that lies beneath.

But he had never anticipated the return of Katherine, nor that of Cory – obstacles who must now be removed. In a final showdown, he pursues his prey across the expanse of the Tatiara property and finally to the shearing shed where he fatally wounds Cory. But as he closes in on Katherine, he orchestrates his own demise in a classic case of misadventure ... pinned beneath a 160kg wool bale, his heart pierced by a remnant of the dynasty which he helped destroy; an ancient pair of hand wool shears deemed "dangerous in the wrong hands".

Katherine's victory over Hartmann, however, is bittersweet. Given the legal ramifications of the dubious ram sale, the future of the Spencer operations is tenuous. But more than this, not only has Katherine lost her lover, she is devastated on learning that her intimacy with Cory is deemed forbidden by both their respective cultures – a tragedy occasioned by her imperious father who, in his younger years, deemed it his right to sow his seeds far and wide. Perfect grounds for blackmail ... and its tragic consequences.

~~Katherine Spencer, is a successful Melbourne marketing executive in her late thirties, who's been absent from the family wool-growing property since her late teens. But when her estranged father, Old Tom Spencer, suffers a near fatal accident, she is summoned to the home of her youth. Old Tom, an anachronism, stuck in the world of his Irish Catholic forebears, is patriarch of the once powerful 'Tatiara Park' dynasty, which over the years has fallen into decline.~~

~~Upon Old Tom's eventual death, Katherine is bequeathed the property, with certain curious provisos; the financial affairs are to remain in the hands of the long-serving family lawyer, city-based Raymond Hartmann, while management of the operations is assigned to an apparent stranger, Cory Hamilton, for as long as he so desires — or lives. It is a nebulous and an unwieldy arrangement for all.~~

~~Notwithstanding these quasi-legal constraints, Katherine decides to stay on and exercise her executive skills, overseeing the rebuilding of the property to bring it into the twenty-first century, undertaking extensive research to that effect. With a renewed faith in the burgeoning wool industry, she enlists the astute Cory, and together they set about building a new generation of breeding stock primed to take advantage of the growing market...and in time develop an intimate personal relationship.~~

~~While various subplots deal with business corruption, racism, and the role of the clergy in some people's lives, *'Good Country'* is an apolitical work of fiction aimed at the adult demographic.~~

OLD VERSION

~~**Old Tom Spencer**, patriarch of the once powerful wool growing dynasty, 'Tatiara Park', now fallen into decline, is an anachronism, stuck in the world of his Irish Catholic forebears. When he suffers a near-fatal accident, his estranged daughter Katherine, a successful thirty-something marketing executive, is summoned to the property from which she has been absent since her late teens.~~

~~Upon her father's eventual death, Katherine is bequeathed the property, with certain curious provisos; the financial affairs are to remain in the hands of the family lawyer, city-based Raymond Hartmann, while management of the operations is assigned to an apparent stranger, Cory Hamilton, for as long as he so desires — or lives. It is a nebulous and an unwieldy arrangement for all.~~

~~Notwithstanding these quasi-legal constraints, Katherine exercises her executive skills and oversees the rebuilding of the property to bring it into the twenty-first century, undertaking extensive research to that effect. With a renewed faith in the burgeoning wool industry, she enlists the astute Cory, and together they set~~

about building a new generation of breeding stock primed to take advantage of the growing market...and in time develop an intimate personal relationship.

Katherine's continued research, however, reveals anomalies concerning the diminished size of the family's landholdings since that event. She determines to find out where the land has gone, to whom, and under what circumstances. Seems that much of Tatiara Park has been purchased by Hartmann for a song, the last parcel transacted a mere week before Old Tom's death.

But more than this, much of the land surrounding her current landholding has also been acquired by Hartmann. Convinced of a conflict of interest, Katherine dismisses him, despite (if not in spite of) her late father's wishes.

Hartmann, however, will not go quietly. He's hell-bent on removing Cory from the scene. He confronts the lovers and discloses Cory's indigenous heritage, claiming his ulterior motive is to mount a land rights claim. Unaware of Cory's background, Katherine is forced to question the sincerity of her emotions and her latent racial prejudices.

But when he offers his resignation, she finds she cannot dismiss Cory completely from her heart. Nor can she ignore her conviction that he is integral to the scheme of things at Tatiara Park and she sets out to learn more of the plight of indigenous people of Tatiara, particularly since the arrival of the woolgrowers. She enlists the archival services of the regional newspaper, and inadvertently unravels the particulars of the world record sale price of a prize ram, paid to Tatiara Park by a communist Chinese syndicate some three decades earlier—a deal brokered by none other than Raymond Hartmann. A Pandora's box is opened, exposing a plethora of malefactions implicating an intricate web of players.

For decades, it seems, everyone played into the hands of Hartmann whose objective has been to take control of the entire region, including the Spencer empire—not for what grows upon the rich fertile land but rather for the mineral wealth that lies beneath.

But Hartmann had not anticipated the return of Katherine, nor that of Cory—obstacles who must now be removed. In a final showdown, he pursues his prey across the expanse of the Tatiara property and finally to the shearing shed where he fatally wounds Cory. But as he closes in on Katherine, he orchestrates his own demise in a classic case of misadventure ... pinned beneath a 160kg wool bale, his heart pierced by a remnant of the dynasty he helped destroy, an ancient pair of hand wool shears deemed "dangerous in the wrong hands".

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their respective cultures — a tragedy occasioned by her imperious father who, in his younger years, deemed it his right to sow his seeds far and wide.

'Duplicity' is set in the S-E of South Australia and deals with what has become a contentious issue in rural Australia (and probably globally) viz, the conflict associated with the encroachment of oil fracking on the agricultural industry. Given its setting, it has been written for the most part using Australian vernacular, although some terms from the US now creeping into popular use are also used. While various subplots deal with racism and the role of the clergy in some people's lives, *'Duplicity'*, with a probable PG-13 (US), M rating (Aus), is an apolitical work of pure fiction aimed at the adult demographic.