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Win a signed copy of new tantalising crime novel

A FOURTH-generation Australian farmer, who has been ravaged by the worst drought in living memory, has written a searing novel about crime and vengeance – with a twist.

Told from the villain's perspective, *The Silver Dagger* is a first-person account of a highly intelligent but deeply tormented serial killer operating along the country's pristine beaches, who just may be the worst person alive.

Jame McLean wrote the 300-page novel over four months, having inherited his

love of storytelling from his grandfather – a highly respected civic leader in far southwest Queensland, simply referred to as 'The Boss'.

Mr McLean, 32, says it was their lengthy and wide-ranging chats that gave rise to his fertile imagination, which often runs wild during tireless hours on his 40,000-hectare sheep and cattle property.

"My idea was not to entertain readers with what the killer does – because he is, after all, a vicious man with a misguided

sense of right and wrong – rather to draw them in through a compelling justification of his actions," he says.

The Silver Dagger is a confronting read and Mr McLean is at pains to point out that it is not autobiographical "although as a rural producer with livestock and wildlife on the property, you do have to put animals down for all sorts of reasons and you must get past your initial qualms about doing so."

He describes farming life as brutal and

extreme, especially through the drought that first hit in 2000 and "ripped out my heart".

• *The Block* has a signed copy of *The Silver Dagger* (valued at \$29.95) to give away. To win, write your name, address and phone number on the back of an envelope and send it to: The Silver Dagger Competition, PO Box 1907, Townsville Qld, 4810. Entries close June 19.

