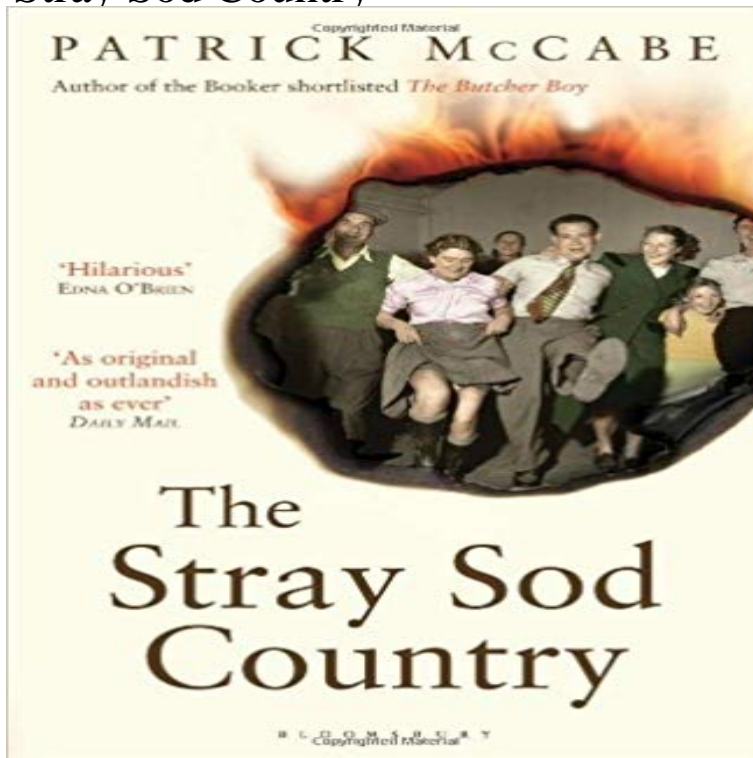


Stray Sod Country



It is 1958, and as Laika, the Sputnik dog is launched into space, Golly Murray, the Cullymore barbers wife, finds herself oddly obsessing about the canine cosmonaut. Meanwhile, Fonsy Teddy O'Neill, is returning, like the prodigal son, from overseas, with brylcream in his hair, and a Cuban-heeled swagger to his step, having experienced his coming-of-age in Butlins, Skegness. Father Augustus Hand is working on a bold new theatrical production for Easter, which he, for one, knows will put Cullymore on the map. And, as the Manchester United football team prepare to take off from Munich airport, James A Reilly sits in his hovel by the lake outside town, with his pet fox and his fathers gun, feeling the weight of an insidious and inscrutable presence pressing down upon him. From the closed terraces and back lanes of rural Ireland to the information highway and global separations of our own time, *The Stray Sod Country* is at once an homage to what we think we may have lost and a chilling reminder that the past has never really passed. With echoes of *Peyton Place*, and *Fellini's Amarcord*, and with a sinister, diabolical narrator at its heart, this is at once a story of a small town - with its secrets, fears, friendships and betrayals - and a sweeping, grand guignol of theatrical extravagance from one of the finest writers of his generation.

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