

SHORELINE

EXT. BEACH - DAWN - 30 YEARS AGO

Grey dawn.

A BOY (6) stands alone in cold sand, staring at the horizon.

The sea barely moves.

A baby's cry pierces the stillness.

The boy turns.

A solitary beach house in weak light.

Cries echoes from inside - raw, insistent.

He trudges toward it, sand clinging to his bare feet.

At the door.

He stops.

The wailing swells.

His fingers tighten on the handle.

He almost opens it.

Doesn't.

CUT TO BLACK.

INT. HOUSE - EVENING (PRESENT DAY)

PAM (70s), tightly-wound, stares at her clenched arthritic hands beside an untouched plate.

GREG (70s), gruff, a beat behind, at the sink, lost in faded floral curtains.

Pam's eyes drift to the TV:

- Waves collapse. Shells spin in backwash.

Greg shuffles over. Sits opposite.

She tries to unclench her fingers. They barely move.

He watches, stoney-faced.

GREG

Worse?

She nods. His eyebrows lift, resigned.

He frowns. Glances about.

GREG

I had it right here, my-

He taps his temple, searching.

She waits. Still. Looks directly at him.

PAM

It's funny...what goes.

A sideways look.

He presses his thumb into the table's edge.

GREG

We did what we could.

Her eyebrows flutter.

She nudges her plate. A millimetre.

He frowns, reaches for the salt shaker. Aligns it.

Reconsiders. Adjusts it again.

His fingers hover - as if something might break.

She looks up at him. Holds it.

PAM

(quietly)

I don't want the long version of
this.

His hand drops.

He looks around the shabby room.

GREG

No. Me neither.

She manages a small smile. He nods, softer.

Their hands find each others at the centre of the table.

They sit, perfectly still, in the dim room.

INT. GARAGE - NIGHT

Amber streetlight cuts through a high window.

Every wall, packed: forgotten suitcases, rusted tools, a dust-caked pedestal fan, a wall calendar faded to a ghost.

In the middle of it all, the beaten car idles—a low rumble.

Beside a tyre, photographs spill from a torn box.

On top - a beach photo. Two young parents. The woman heavily pregnant. Two children, grinning: PATRICK (6) and JOSIE (9).

The engine splutters. Almost dies. Keeps going.

A VACUUM CLEANER HOSE pokes through the passenger window.

Pam and Greg sit motionless in the back seat.

Under the engine's rumble, an Indian sitar shimmers.

In the photo - Patrick grins.

EXT. SUBURBAN STREET - DAY (NEXT DAY)

Rain lashes down.

A brass GANESH - elephant head, broken tusk - wobbles, taped to the front of an Australia Post e-bike.

PATRICK (36), restless, snarky, rides in navy shorts, fluoro-yellow jacket.

Indian raga blasts through his headphones.

The bike splashes through a puddle. Water sprays grinning Ganesh. Patrick glances down, deadpan.

His phone SHRIEKS. He curses, scrambles for it.

An OLD MAN shuffles straight into his path.

They both look up - too late. Brakes clamp. Tires hiss.

The bike stops hard against the Old Man's ribs.

Patrick rips off his helmet, flushed, eyes wide.

PATRICK
You could've fucking killed me!

He yanks out the phone, glaring.

PATRICK
(aggressively)
Yeah? What?

INT. BDSM DEN - DAY

A sign: ECLIPSE - DARK TO NEW.

Blacked-out windows. Plastic chandeliers. Dim light.

A heavy door creaks open.

Enter VIXEN (39) - latex, heels, riding crop.

A paunchy EXECUTIVE (50s) stands in tight leather shorts.

She eyes him.

VIXEN

Kneel.

He drops at lightning speed.

She circles, crop tapping. Absolute authority.

A blinking lightbulb. She clocks it, irritated.

He glances up. She snaps the crop.

VIXEN

Eyes down!

He obeys.

Vixen resumes her circle.

INT. STAFF ROOM - CONTINUOUS

JOSIE - now out of character - perches at a flimsy plastic table flicking through a supermarket catalogue.

YVONNE (60), leather corset, granny briefs, heels, struts in.

YVONNE

Alright, Joze?

JOSIE

Hey, Von. Surviving?

YVONNE

Booked solid. You?

JOSIE

Cry-baby at four - does my head in.

YVONNE
Same old. Pay to feel it-
(she lights a cigarette)
As long as it's not real.

Josie's phone rings. She looks at it, frowns.

JOSIE
Di?...What?
(listens)
I'm on my way!

She yanks tracksuit pants and sweatshirt over her latex.
Kicks off stilettos. Laces runners.

YVONNE
Problem?

JOSIE
My folks tried to top themselves.

Yvonne blinks.

Josie pulls her hair into a pony tail - tight.

JOSIE
Can you cover for me?

Yvonne studies her for half a beat.

YVONNE
Course.

She bolts.

INT. HOSPITAL - AFTERNOON

Josie waits, hands buried in her sweatshirt.

Patrick approaches in postal uniform.

A quick hug.

JOSIE
This is new.

He shakes his head, eyes moving over her.

PATRICK
Off work?

She pulls up her sweatshirt. He chuckles.

PATRICK
How's the flogging business?

JOSIE
Recession-proof. Yours?

PATRICK
Full of arseholes.

JOSIE
They're looking for gay Doms. I can
put in a word.

PATRICK
I'll think about it.

Enter a TRAINEE DOCTOR (20s).

TRAINEE DOCTOR
The Hart children?

PATRICK
Yeah - we pack our own lunches now.

Trainee Doctor blinks.

JOSIE
That's us.

INT. HOSPITAL WARD - CONTINUOUS

A white curtain swishes back.

Greg - groggy, slouched, oxygen tube.

Pam - upright, tense, hands locked together.

She doesn't look at them.

Josie takes a step forward. Stops.

Patrick hangs back. Already looking anywhere but Pam.

Pam lifts her eyes.

Finds them.

Holds.

PAM
You came.

JOSIE
How are you?

PAM
How do I look?

Patrick lets out a short laugh. No warmth.

PAM
What?

PATRICK
We got the message.

PAM
It wasn't for you.

PATRICK
No?

She looks down.

PAM
I thought-

She looks up. Locks eyes with him.

PAM
I thought this was over.

Patrick doesn't react. Pam shakes her head.

PAM
Years...

JOSIE
Enough.

Pam's eyes flick to Josie.

JOSIE
Not like this.

PAM
You always knew better.

She holds her mother's gaze.

JOSIE
Someone had to.

Pam studies her twisted fingers.

PAM
Why are you here?

JOSIE
Something happened.

Pam stills.

PAM
When?

Josie doesn't answer.

PATRICK
When do you think?

PAM
...

Then-

PAM
A long time ago.

Patrick looks at her properly now.

PATRICK
Yeah. It did.

A NURSE enters.

NURSE
Everything okay in here?

Josie forces a smile.

JOSIE
We were just leaving.

PAM
Already?

Greg turns toward the window.

Patrick's already halfway out.

JOSIE
We'll come back.

Pam watches the door close after them.

PAM
They still blame us.

Greg closes his eyes.

GREG
Course they do.

INT. HOSPITAL - CONTINUOUS

Patrick paces in a tight loop, jaw set.

Josie approaches, drained.

JOSIE
Great day.

A door opens.

Patrick keeps pacing.

The DOCTOR (50s) watches him.

DOCTOR
Patrick.

He stops. Looks up.

DOCTOR
And Josie. Come with me.

INT. CONSULTING ROOM - LATE AFTERNOON

Poster: RECOVERY IS A JOURNEY.

Patrick stands by the window, rigid. Josie sits, tense.

Behind the desk, the Doctor flips through notes.

DOCTOR
They're stable. Medically.

JOSIE
What happens now?

DOCTOR
Mum's arthritis is severe. Dad is
showing early cognitive decline.

JOSIE
We'll arrange support.

The Doctor looks up. Josie avoids his eyes.

DOCTOR
And the attempt.

Silence.

DOCTOR
If nothing changes...it will
happen again.

Patrick rubs the back of his neck.

PATRICK
Options?

DOCTOR
Residential care.

PATRICK
They won't go.

DOCTOR
No.

JOSIE
So what are you saying?

Doctor holds her gaze.

DOCTOR
They'll be discharged to you.

Patrick turns fully.

PATRICK
To us?

DOCTOR
Do they have anyone else?

Patrick glances out the window, a hand on the window frame.

A son pushes his elderly mother in a wheelchair.

They laugh together.

Patrick watches.

His grip on the window frame tightens.

INT. DAY CARE CENTRE - EVENING

Tired pre-schoolers wait for parents.

ELLA (4) spots DIANE (30s) nervy, wrung-out, and runs to her.
Diane produces a packet of chips. Ella beams.

INT. CAR - MOVING - EVENING

Ella in the back, already into the chips.
Diane drives, on a call.

DIANE
How am I supposed to pay Kindy?
(listens)
But she hasn't seen you in weeks-

The line dies.

Diane tosses the dead phone onto the passenger seat.

DIANE
Unbelievable.

In the mirror, Ella chews, distant.

ELLA
I miss Daddy.

Diane grips the wheel tighter.
Keeps driving.

INT. DIANE'S FLAT - NIGHT

Small table.

Overcooked vegetables. Peas.

Ella prods one like its toxic.

DIANE
They're only peas. Eat.

ELLA
They're slimy.

DIANE
Three bites.

Ella shoves the plate away. Peas scatter.

Diane snatches the plate.

DIANE

Fine!

Scrapes it into the bin.

DIANE

No chips. All week!

Ella scowls.

ELLA

I hate you!

She runs down the hall. A door SLAMS.

Diane stands at the bin, plate in hand.

A laugh - hollow, involuntary.

Outside, a car alarm starts.

She reaches up to a shelf above the fridge.

Takes down a medicine bottle.

Dry swallows a pill.

She looks around.

Doesn't move.

Barely there.

EXT. PAM AND GREG'S HOUSE - MORNING

Magpies warble in the gum trees.

Josie pulls up hard in an aging convertible. Parks crooked.

She gets out, hair tight, clutching a bunch of daisies.

Patrick climbs out beside her, windswept, sunglasses askew.

They take in the neglected house: driveway cracked, paint like dead skin, weeds moving in sun-bleached sand.

A beat between them.

EXT. DRIVEWAY / INT. GARAGE - CONTINUOUS

Josie yanks the garage door.

Dust. Clutter. Things lying where they fell.

She stops-

A beach photo spills from a torn box: Pam and Greg, younger, pregnant, with two sunburnt kids, all of them laughing.

Josie looks up - a net of buckets and spades sways overhead.

A flicker of a smile crosses her face.

Patrick steps past her, glances at the photo, ignores it.

PATRICK

Jesus. What a pile of shit.

The daisies hang at her side, face-down.

INT. PAM AND GREG'S HOUSE - CONTINUOUS

The room is dim. Airless.

Stacks of newspapers. Stained, sunken armchairs.

Remotes. Cups. Things within reach.

PATRICK

They didn't even leave a note.

JOSIE

What would it say?

She's already moving-opening a window.

Patrick blinks.

PATRICK

Something...

JOSIE

They're alive.

(beat)

That's something.

He nudges a stack of papers with his foot. Leaves it skewed.

JOSIE

How can they live-

She stacks dirty plates - small, controlled movements.

The front door suddenly opens.

Josie and Patrick turn to look.

Pam and Greg enter.

They see Josie and Patrick and freeze.

PATRICK
They said you were-

A beat.

JOSIE
We gave you a day.

PAM
For what?

Pam and Greg casually enter. Look around.

PAM
We're fine.

PATRICK
Gassing yourselves isn't exactly-

PAM
Convenient?

Patrick starts to throw up his hands. Checks himself.

PATRICK
Why?

Pam and Greg share a look. Closed.

PAM
Why not?

Patrick tenses. The room teeters.

Diane enters, eyes red. She halts, sensing the shift.

Josie eyes flick to her, briefly.

JOSIE
Diane'll be here most days-

DIANE
(quietly)
...what?

JOSIE
We'll fill the gaps. Anything-

PAM
Fill the gaps?

GREG
We're not your project.

PATRICK
You tried to kill yourselves!

A long silence.

PAM
We failed.

Greg shrugs.

GREG
So...that's it.

His eyes drift to the garage.

GREG
Car started first go though.

Josie stares at him, clueless how to respond.

Greg points a remote control at the TV.

ON TV: Australian Football League highlights. Blasting.

PATRICK
There you go then.

He heads for the door. Diane steps in, pulls Josie aside.

DIANE
Joze, I didn't know-

JOSIE
It's just for now.

She squeezes Diane's arm, already turning away.

Diane looks at her in quiet trepidation.

Patrick and Josie leave.

ON TV: A goal.

COMMENTATOR
An absolute belter! A six-pointer
after the siren, it's pure theatre!

Greg watches the screen.

Pam watches Greg.

Diane stares at the closed door.

The crowd roars.

INT. CAR - DAY

Engine off.

Josie grips the wheel.

Patrick stares ahead.

PATRICK
We can't fix this.

JOSIE
Someone has to.

She starts the car. Slams it into drive. The car jolts.

Patrick stares through the windscreen - blank, overwhelmed.

MATCH CUT TO:

INT. PRIMARY SCHOOL CLASSROOM - DAY

Patrick (10) stares at a blackboard. Morose.

MS. HAMSEDEHWANI (early 30s) enters. Calm. Present.

Patrick looks up. Instantly comes alive.

She writes on the board: LOVE POETRY

Groans.

MS. HAMSEDEHWANI
It's not just kissing in the rain.

Sniggers.

MS. HAMSEDEHWANI
It can be longing. Devotion.
A 'beloved' isn't always a person.

She opens a book, reads. Patrick leans forward.

MS. HAMSEDEHWANI
I have become you...and you me.
I am the body, you the soul.

A kid snorts. Patrick snaps.

PATRICK
You're ruining it!

The class startles.

She looks at him. Doesn't react.

The bell RINGS. Chaos. Kids rush out.

Patrick stays.

MS. HAMSEDEHWANI
You're free to go.

He swallows.

PATRICK
Is it real?

She turns.

PATRICK
Feeling, like...something else?

She crouches beside him, level with his eyes.

MS. HAMSEDEHWANI
It's real.

He waits.

MS. HAMSEDEHWANI
But you don't force it.
You...notice it.

Patrick nods, fast.

MS. HAMSEDEHWANI
Start small.
Your breath.

She looks at the book. Pauses. Hands it to him.

He takes it, wide-eyed.

She places her palm on her chest.

MS. HAMSEDEHWANI
Above all - stay here.

She stands, walks away.

He watches her leave.

Breath steady.

Book clutched tight.

BACK TO PRESENT:

INT. JOSIE'S CAR - DAY

Patrick inhales-

But it catches. Shallow. Wrong.

He slumps in the seat. Sunglasses on.

They travel in silence.

The car pulls over. Patrick gets out.

JOSIE

Don't forget tomorrow.

PATRICK

Can't wait.

Josie speeds off.

EXT. REAR OF BDSM DEN - CONTINUOUS

A mug of coffee steams on a battered green wheelie bin.

Yvonne, in work gear, leans against the wall, smoking.

A cat winds around her leg. Settles in a patch of sun.

Her phone buzzes. She answers.

YVONNE

Yeah.

INTERCUT - INT. CAR / EXT. REAR OF BDSM DEN

INT. CAR - CONTINUOUS

Josie drives. Fast. Hands tight on the wheel.

JOSIE

Hey - you around?

EXT. REAR OF BDSM DEN - CONTINUOUS

YVONNE
Yeah, love.

JOSIE (O.S.)
It's Mum and Dad.
(beat)
They're being discharged.

She sips her coffee. Watches the cat.

INT. CAR - CONTINUOUS

The car stops at lights.

JOSIE
They can't manage. Not properly.
Mum's hands are-
(she cuts herself off)
-and Dad's starting to drift.

The indicator ticks.

EXT. REAR OF BDSM DEN - CONTINUOUS

Yvonne flicks ash. Listens.

JOSIE (O.S.)
We've got food, meds, someone there
most days-

YVONNE
Someone?

A beat.

JOSIE (O.S.)
Diane.

Yvonne watches the cat roll. Exposed. Unbothered.

YVONNE
Bakery girl?

JOSIE (O.S.)
She helps out.

A slight lift of Yvonne's brow.

INT. CAR - CONTINUOUS

Josie turns at the lights.

JOSIE
We'll be there too. It's covered.

EXT. REAR OF BDSM DEN - CONTINUOUS

Yvonne lets it pass.

YVONNE
You seen them?

JOSIE (O.S.)
Yeah.

YVONNE
And?

INT. CAR - CONTINUOUS

JOSIE
Mum's the same. Hard.
Dad's somewhere else.

EXT. REAR OF BDSM DEN - CONTINUOUS

Yvonne takes a drag.

JOSIE (O.S.)
Patrick reckons it's punishment.
(quick, defensive)
It's not.

Yvonne watches the cat, reflecting.

YVONNE
You can flog a stranger senseless -
he'll thank you. But say one honest
thing to your folks -

She stubs out her cigarette on the bin lid.

YVONNE
Next minute, everyone's crying in
the pantry.

A dry laugh from Josie, off-screen.

INT. CAR - CONTINUOUS

Josie pushes her sunglasses up, covering her eyes.

JOSIE

Yeah.
(beat)
Anyway - I should...

YVONNE (O.S.)

You're busy.

JOSIE

Yeah.

A breath. Something unsaid - then gone.

JOSIE

I'll call you later.

EXT. REAR OF BDSM DEN - CONTINUOUS

YVONNE

Later.

She lowers the phone.

The cat leans its weight into her leg.

She picks up her coffee.

Raises it slightly-

Stops.

Lowers it again.

She gazes at the narrow strip of sunlight.

PRE-LAP: Kids SHRIEK. Water slaps tile.

INT. AQUATIC CENTRE - MORNING

Shallow pool at one end. Deep-blue drop off at the other.

Ella kicks along the edge - confident, fast, dolphin-like.

Josie watches her - relaxed, leaning on the barrier.

Patrick, nearby - not in the water. Toes curled on wet tiles.

ELLA
Watch this!

She dunks under - disappears.

Patrick leans forward, his breath becoming short.

Ella pops up further along - grinning.

He puffs out his cheeks. Josie barely reacts.

JOSIE
Eyes open, Ella.

Ella salutes. Swims off again.

Patrick steps down onto the first submerged step.

Winces at the cold.

Another step.

Water at his calves.

Then knees.

He stops there.

A KID cannonballs nearby - water crashes over him.

Patrick flinches.

Laughs it off - too loud.

PATRICK
Jesus-

Josie smirks.

JOSIE
It's water.

Patrick forces a grin.

PATRICK
Yeah. Got it.

Ella paddles back.

ELLA
Come deeper.

She gestures - easy, inviting.

Patrick shakes his head lightly.

PATRICK
I'm good here.

ELLA
It's not deep!

Josie, without looking:

JOSIE
It drops.

Ella shrugs - unfazed - and pushes off again.

Patrick watches her go.

His foot edges forward - testing the slope.

Feels it fall away.

He pulls back.

Across the pool - a LIFEGUARD scans, bored.

Ella drifts further than before - nearing the rope line.

Josie turns - distracted by something behind her.

A phone buzz. A glance.

Patrick sees it.

Ella's rhythm falters - just slightly.

A breath mistimed.

A small splash - wrong.

He straightens.

- This is it.

Josie turns back. Spots Ella.

She dives in.

Two quick strokes - she's there.

She steadies Ella without fuss.

JOSIE
Slow down.

ELLA
 (laughing)
 I am!

Nothing. Already over.

Patrick exhales. Small. Private.

He steps back up, out of the water.

Grabs a towel. Dries his hands, though they're barely wet.

ELLA
 (to Patrick)
 You didn't come!

PATRICK
 Next time.

He smiles.

INT. HOUSE - AFTERNOON

Greg dozes in an armchair. One hand dangled over a beer.

Pam squints at pill bottles.

Diane enters, carrying a foil-wrapped casserole dish.

PAM
 Left us to you, have they.

The foil crackles in Diane's grip.

DIANE
 I've made-

She sets it down. Pam lifts an eyebrow.

PAM
 They should be here.

Diane studies the paper plates, avoiding Pam.

A fly TAPS against the window. Tap. Tap.

PAM
 We weren't much-
 (beat)
 -good at it.

Greg stares ahead.

Diane's eyes catch on a tarnished firefighter medal on a shelf. She looks at Pam, unsure.

DIANE

They came.
(beat)
That counts.

PAM

Duty.

Diane opens her mouth.

DIANE

It's normal to feel-

Greg snaps upright.

GREG

Don't. Do. That!

The beer wobbles in his hand.

GREG

We made a decision!
(a beat)
Took ages.

PAM

Two hours.

GREG

Near enough three.

The fly keeps hitting the glass.

Pam watches it.

PAM

We wanted it finished.

A long beat.

She turns to Diane.

PAM

It isn't.

Diane squares the casserole dish with the tablecloth pattern.

She tears off the foil - a harsh metallic rip.

Steam rises.

The serving spoon hovers.

No one moves.

Tap.

Tap.

Tap.

INT. SUPERMARKET - LATE AFTERNOON

Bright. Busy. Loud.

Diane unloads groceries while Ella kicks in the trolley seat.

The CASHIER scans.

BEEP. BEEP. BEEP.

ELLA

Mum.

Diane taps her card.

DECLINED.

She tries again.

ELLA

Mum!

DIANE

Just hold on, Ella!

DECLINED.

Heat rises in Diane's face.

A hand appears beside her, slides in a card.

APPROVED.

Diane turns.

Yvonne. Matter of fact. A small wink.

YVONNE

Got it.

EXT. SMALL SUBURBAN CAFÉ - LATE AFTERNOON

Diane and Yvonne sit outside with paper cups.

Ella picks apart a muffin.

YVONNE
The Harts?

DIANE
Yeah...for now.

YVONNE
How are they?

A small laugh from Diane.

DIANE
Depends who you ask.

YVONNE
And you?

DIANE
Fine.
(then)
Just tired.

Ella climbs into Diane's lap.

Diane holds her without thinking.

YVONNE
I'm about tomorrow.
Drop her if you need.

DIANE
Thanks.

Yvonne stands.

YVONNE
Finish that while it's hot.

She taps Ella's nose, heads off.

Diane watches her go.

Her hand drifts to her temple.

INT. PAM AND GREG'S HOUSE - LATER

Pam sits with an old shirt of Greg's in her lap.

Sewing kit beside her.

Her twisted fingers work a needle through the button.

Miss.

Again.

Again.

The thread knots.

The button hangs loose.

PAM
Damn stupid thing.

GREG
Throw it out.

PAM
Nothing wrong with the shirt.

Greg reaches for the shirt.

Pam pulls it back.

She studies the shirt.

Gets up.

Takes it to the kitchen.

Drops it in the bin.

On a shelf: an old photo of Greg in a hand-knitted jumper.

Pam turns it face down.

Stands there.

Outside, a neighbour's leaf blower whines.

INT. PAM AND GREG'S HOUSE - LATER

Diane enters.

TV loud - racing commentary.

A stale smell.

Dirty plates stacked.

Wet washing in a basket.

Pam stands in the kitchen, holding tablets in her palm.

PAM
Are these mine?

DIANE
Yeah. Those first.

Pam nods.

Sets them on the counter.

Walks out.

Diane looks at the tablets.

Then after her.

DIANE
Greg.

Nothing.

Diane moves to Greg.

DIANE
Has she taken them?

He doesn't look away from the screen.

GREG
Course she has.

She looks back at the tablets on the counter.

PAM (O.S.)
Diane...?

Diane closes her eyes once.

Heads out.

Silence after the front door shuts.

Greg waits.

Then lowers the TV volume.

Pam enters, sits at the table.

GREG
She fusses.

PAM
She has to.

A beat.

GREG
You take them?

Pam motions to the counter.

He gets up, brings the tablets and a glass of water.

Hands them to her.

She takes them.

PAM
You hate her.

GREG
No.
(beat)
Needing her.

Pam studies him.

PAM
Same thing.

INT. YVONNE'S HOUSE - NEXT MORNING

Kettle whistles.

Gas clicks off.

Door opens.

Ella slips past Diane and runs inside.

Bill sits, reading glasses low, in an armchair.

Ella stops.

Waves.

He waves back solemnly.

YVONNE
(to Diane, low voice)
A live one.

DIANE
You've no idea-

YVONNE
Pick up whenever.

DIANE
Thanks.

Yvonne gives a dismissive flap of the hand.

YVONNE
Go on.

Diane leaves.

INT. YVONNE'S HOUSE - LATER

Butter foams in a pan.

Pancakes colour gold.

Ella kneels on a chair watching.

Yvonne lays out jam, syrup, ice-cream.

ELLA
All of them!

YVONNE
Promise you'll eat your veggies.

Ella smiles.

ELLA
Kay.

Yvonne adds everything. Ella tucks in.

Yvonne wipes Ella's chin.

Ella leans into the touch.

INT. PAM AND GREG'S HOUSE - DAY

Pre-match coverage booms.

Greg inches from the screen.

Pam twists a jar lid.

It slips.

SMASH.

Glass.

Brine.

Pickled onions roll.

Pam freezes - barefoot in the middle of it.

PAM

Oh God.

DIANE

Stay there.

Greg barely glances round.

GREG

It was loose already.

The kettle starts to whistle in the kitchen.

Pam looks down at her feet.

PAM

Diane...

DIANE

I know.

Diane grabs paper towel. Dustpan.

Greg stands, annoyed.

GREG

They'll shut the dates.

He marches to the front door. Yanks on the handle.

DIANE

Greg - it's on telly.

The kettle's whistle grows louder.

In the side doorway, Patrick appears.

Sees Pam stranded. Greg at the door. Diane torn.

He hovers.

Backs away.

The side door clicks shut.

Pam starts to cry.

PAM

Diane!

The kettle screams.

The front door opens - daylight floods in.

Diane is caught between Pam and Greg at the threshold.

INT. GARAGE / EXT. SIDE OF HOUSE - CONTINUOUS

Patrick emerges from the garage.

Stops outside.

Bent over.

Hands on knees.

He drags air in.

Lets it out too fast.

Again.

He straightens.

Looks back at the house.

Doesn't go in.

Walks to his bike.

SMASH CUT TO:

INT. PAM AND GREG'S HOUSE - AFTERNOON

The hob is off.

A tea towel blackened at the edge.

Diane stands at the sink, catching her breath.

From the lounge-

A stadium roar.

Greg shouts at the umpire.

Pam laughing with him.

Diane grips the counter until her knuckles pale.

Doesn't let go immediately.

Then lets go.

Turns on the tap.

Starts with the glasses.

INT. YOGA STUDIO - AFTERNOON

Quiet room.

Rows of mats.

Josie slides her phone under a towel.

It BUZZES.

DIANE.

She turns it face down.

A YOGA INSTRUCTOR (30s) sits opposite the class.

YOGA INSTRUCTOR
If your mind wanders...
(beat)
Notice it kindly.

Josie closes her eyes.

The phone buzzes again.

She reaches blindly for it.

Presses it still beneath the towel.

Waits for silence.

INT. PAM AND GREG'S HOUSE - NIGHT

Pam moves room to room.

PAM
Greg?

No answer.

She opens the bedroom door.

Stops.

Greg stands in his old fireman's jacket.

Facing the mirror.

Shoulders set.

Trying on the man he was.

He tries to button the jacket.

Can't quite manage it.

He sees Pam in the reflection.

A beat.

Neither speaks.

Pam eases the door closed.

Leans there.

Hand on the frame.

INT. PATRICK'S FLAT - NIGHT

A crumpled Australia Post uniform over a chair.

Laptop glow.

A breathing exercise video plays.

Patrick sits cross-legged in boxers.

ON SCREEN MAN

In for four...

Patrick inhales.

BABY CRYING through the wall.

He exhales-too fast.

Starts again.

ON SCREEN MAN

...and out.

Patrick slams the laptop shut.

Silence.

He picks up an old poetry book.

It falls open in his hands.

He reads.

His breathing slows.

He turns the page.

Doesn't read it.

INT. YVONNE'S HOUSE - NIGHT

Warm light.

Ella sits with a bowl of peas.

Eating steadily.

She and Yvonne watch Bill-

Building a tower from playing cards.

Doorbell.

Bill answers.

Diane enters, damp-haired, breathless.

DIANE

Sorry.

She sees the bowl.

DIANE

You ate peas?

ELLA

Threeteen.

YVONNE

Thirteen.

ELLA

That's what I said.

A small laugh.

Diane nearly joins it.

YVONNE

How was today?

DIANE

Fine.

Yvonne holds her gaze.

Ella hugs Yvonne hard.

Then Bill.

He pretends injury.

Ella giggles.

Diane watches them.

Something tightens.

YVONNE

Any time.

Diane nods. Quick.

Ella is already halfway out.

Diane briefly catches Yvonne's eye.

The door closes.

EXT. YVONNE'S DRIVEWAY/INT. CAR - CONTINUOUS

Rain starting.

Ella climbs in the back.

Fumbles the buckle.

ELLA (O.S.)

Auntie Von's birds swear.

DIANE

Do they.

Diane leans in.

Clips the buckle.

Gets in.

Turns the key.

Nothing.

Again.

Nothing.

ELLA
Can I go tomorrow?

Again.

The engine coughs.

DIANE
We'll see.

ELLA
Tomorrow though?

The engine catches.

DIANE
I said we'll see.

Too sharp.

Ella goes quiet.

Wipers smear the glass.

Diane pulls away.

One tail-light out.

INT. DIANE'S FLAT - NIGHT

Ella skips down the hallway.

DIANE (O.S.)
Pyjamas.

A door clicks shut.

Diane stands in the dark kitchen.

Still in her coat.

Her phone RINGS.

She let's it ring out.

PING.

She checks it.

Presses play.

JOSIE (V.O.)
Hey Di - the glass thing's really
thrown Mum, and Dad's restless as
hell. Keeps trying to head out.
Call me - need to sort tomorrow.

She hits call.

JOSIE (O.S.)
Di?

Traffic noise behind her.

Diane says nothing - a faint breath on the line.

She hangs up.

Plays the message again.

As Josie talks, Diane looks around the untidy flat.

Dishes. Laundry. Bills.

Then up-

A high shelf above the fridge.

She stares at it.

At the floor.

Nowhere.

Her hand lifts slightly.

Stops.

HARD CUT TO:

INT. DIANE'S FLAT - MORNING

Hard sunlight through blinds.

Ella stirs beneath Koala bear covers.

Sits up.

Squints.

Pads down the hall.

The bedroom door is ajar.

She keeps going.

In the kitchen, Ella pours cereal.

Too much.

Milk.

Eats.

Quiet.

She carries the bowl back down the hall.

Climbs onto Diane's bed.

Eats.

Waits.

ELLA

Am I going to Auntie Von's today?

Nothing.

ELLA

Mum.

She edges closer.

Reaches out.

ELLA

Mum?

The flat stays still.

INT. YVONNE'S CAR - CONTINUOUS

Music loud.

Yvonne drives.

She stops at a red light.

Her phone lights up: DIANE.

She answers.

YVONNE

Hey-

She hears something.

Kills the music.

YVONNE

Di?

A small breath.

ELLA (O.S.)

Auntie Von?

Yvonne stills.

YVONNE

Everything alright, love?

ELLA

I need to go to Kindy.

YVONNE

Can I talk to Mum?

ELLA

She's asleep.

A beat.

ELLA

She won't wake up.

The light turns green.

Cars behind her HONK.

Yvonne doesn't move.

YVONNE

I'm coming. Stay there, okay?

ELLA

Kay.

Yvonne drops the phone onto the seat.

Hits the accelerator.

INT. DIANE'S FLAT - DAY

Front door ajar.

Yvonne enters quickly.

Ella stands in the hall clutching a worn soft toy.

YVONNE

Diane?

No answer.

Yvonne hurries to the bedroom.

INT. DIANE'S BEDROOM - CONTINUOUS

Diane lies on the bed.

Sheets twisted.

Yvonne stops for half a beat.

Then crosses to her.

Touches her face.

Shakes her shoulder.

YVONNE

Diane.

Nothing.

Ella appears in the doorway.

Still as furniture.

INTERCUT-

DIANE'S FLAT / SUBURBAN STREET / PAM AND GREG'S HOUSE

INT. DIANE'S BEDROOM - DAY

Yvonne kneels beside Diane, phone wedged to her ear.

YVONNE

She's not waking up.

Ella hovers in the doorway.

INT. PAM AND GREG'S HOUSE - DAY

Greg turns the TV louder.

Pam flinches.

Looks toward the hall.

INT. PAM AND GREG'S HOUSE - DAY

Pam turns from the window.

Her eyes land on Diane's clean casserole dish.

Waits for the latch of the front door.

Nothing.

Greg watches the match.

FADE OUT

INT. PRIVATE SESSION ROOM - DAY

Low light.

Controlled space.

Session in motion.

Josie's phone BUZZES.

She ignores it.

Again.

Again.

She glances down.

YVONNE.

She silences it.

Continues.

The phone lights again, persistent.

She breaks rhythm.

The CLIENT notices.

CLIENT

You good?

Josie hesitates.

JOSIE

Just a moment.

She steps away.

Answers.

JOSIE
I'm with-

A pause.

She listens.

Her face drains.

Still.

JOSIE
Right.
(beat)
Don't call anyone yet.
I'll sort it.

She hangs up.

Stands still.

Then returns.

JOSIE
Where were we?

She resumes.

INT. PAM AND GREG'S HOUSE - LATER

TV blaring.

PANELIST (O.S.)
Geelong are in all sorts of trouble-

Josie stands behind Greg.

JOSIE
Dad.

He doesn't turn.

A beat.

JOSIE
It's Diane.
(beat)
She's gone.

Greg keeps watching the TV.

GREG

Did she take her tablets?

Josie stares at him.

She reaches for the remote.

Switches the TV off.

Silence drops.

Greg finally turns.

GREG

What did you do that for?

JOSIE

We need to-

GREG

Put it back on.

He stands.

Walks out.

Josie stays.

INT. JOSIE'S CAR/EXT. YVONNE'S HOUSE - DAY

Engine idling.

Josie watches from the car.

Yvonne speaks with a SOCIAL WORKER.

The Social Worker leaves.

Yvonne waits for Josie to get out of the car.

Josie doesn't.

YVONNE

You can come in.

JOSIE

I can't.

YVONNE

Why?

A beat.

Josie grips the wheel.

JOSIE
I've got them.

YVONNE
You've got-

JOSIE
They're fine.

YVONNE
That's not what I-

Josie shakes her head once.

JOSIE
I'll call you.

Yvonne doesn't move.

Just watches her.

Josie holds still a second too long.

Then starts the car.

Pulls away.

EXT. PAM AND GREG'S HOUSE - DAY

Patrick's postal bike leans by the door.

Weeds push through cracked concrete.

Patrick stands with Josie in the doorway.

JOSIE
Just a couple of weeks.

Patrick looks past her.

Inside:

Greg smooths the tablecloth.

Again.

Pam stands at the window.

Still.

PATRICK

Yeah.

CUT TO:

MONTAGE - DAY

Patrick bands mail.

The elastic snaps.

He pauses.

Tries again.

-

Josie sits at the kitchen table.

Pills lined up.

She hesitates.

Adds one.

Greg watches.

Pam doesn't respond.

-

Patrick cycles through rain.

Head down.

A car door opens without warning.

He brakes late.

-

MONTAGE - NIGHT

Pam sits at a crossword.

Pen hovering above paper.

Doesn't write.

-

Greg opens the fridge.

Closes it.

Opens it again.

-

Pam lies in bed.

Eyes open.

House quiet.

INT. PAM AND GREG'S HOUSE -DAY

A knock.

Josie wrenches the door.

It flies open.

A NEIGHBOUR stands there. Hesitant.

NEIGHBOUR
Just...checking in.
(beat)
We haven't seen Diane-

A beat too long.

JOSIE
She's gone.

The neighbour blinks.

NEIGHBOUR
Oh God...I'm so sorry.

Josie nods once.

She closes the door.

Leans her head against it.

INT. PAM AND GREG'S HOUSE - DAY

The table is set.

Properly.

Plates. Cutlery. Glasses.

Napkins folded too carefully.

Josie stands back, assesses.

JOSIE

Right.

Pam and Greg sit.

They wait a moment too long before eating.

Pam lifts her fork.

Greg mirrors her.

They begin.

Slow.

Measured.

Too aware of themselves.

A long beat.

JOSIE

It's...nice.

Silence holds.

Greg reaches for his glass.

Knocks it.

Water spreads across the table.

No one reacts immediately.

Pam watches the puddle widen.

Josie stands.

Chair scraping.

Gets a cloth.

INT. PAM AND GREG'S HOUSE - LATER

Pam stands at the sink.

Plate in hand.

She holds it out toward Greg.

Suds drip to the floor.

Behind her-

Greg opens a drawer.

Closes it.

Opens another.

Closes it.

PAM

Greg?

No response.

Pam turns slightly.

The plate slips.

It lands.

Flat.

Doesn't break.

Josie enters quickly.

Looks at the plate.

At them.

JOSIE

Mum?

INT. JOSIE'S CAR - DAY

Josie drives.

Phone to ear.

JOSIE

Yeah, they're okay.

She looks into the visor mirror.

Fixes her hair.

Drops it.

JOSIE

They're fine.

The road keeps moving.

INT. PAM AND GREG'S HOUSE - DAY

Pam at the kitchen bench.

Diane's casserole dish in her hands.

She looks for somewhere to put it.

Opens a cupboard.

Full.

Closes it.

Another.

Full.

She stops.

Looks up.

Top shelf.

Too high.

She hesitates.

Then reaches.

On her toes.

The dish wobbles.

She adjusts-

Too late.

SMASH.

Red ceramic explodes across the floor.

A long beat.

Pam doesn't move.

She looks down.

Pieces everywhere.

She steps forward-

CRUNCH.

Stops.

Looks down again.

A shard in her foot.

Blood appears.

Slow at first.

Pam watches it.

PAM

Greg.

No answer.

She tries to shift her weight.

Pain hits.

Sharp.

Immediate.

She grips the bench.

PAM

Greg.

Louder.

Nothing.

She looks toward the doorway.

Too far.

Takes a breath.

Tries again-

Can't.

PAM

Greg!

Blood spreads across the tiles.

Mixing with red glaze.

She stands there.

Stuck.

CUT TO BLACK.

EXT. PAM AND GREG'S HOUSE - DAY

Early sun picks out thistle heads in a light breeze.

Josie's car in the driveway.

Patrick arrives.

Hesitates at the window.

Lights a cigarette.

Smokes it.

Then goes in.

INT. PAM AND GREG'S HOUSE - DAY

Pam sits with her bandaged foot elevated.

Josie clears plates. Glasses. Rubbish.

Efficient.

Patrick picks up magazines.

Looks at them.

Puts them back where they were.

INT. PAM AND GREG'S HOUSE - DAY

Laundry basket on Pam's bed.

Pam drags out an ironing board.

It catches.

SCRAPE.

It collapses.

Josie enters.

JOSIE

Here.

She lifts it into place.

Plugs in the iron.

Moves on.

INT. PAM AND GREG'S HOUSE - LATER

Greg opens the fridge.

Stares.

Gives up.

Walks away.

Fridge beeps.

INT. PAM AND GREG'S HOUSE - MORNING

Pam moves through the kitchen.

Sees the fridge open.

Inside:

Diane's labelled leftovers.

She closes it.

Drinks water.

Leaves.

Greg enters.

Pours cereal.

Opens the fridge.

Pours milk.

Eats.

Stops.

Spits it out.

GREG
Damn milk's off.

INT. KITCHEN - LATE AFTERNOON

Flame on.

Pam distracted.

Greg hovering.

Josie enters.

Sees it.

A beat.

JOSIE
Just...don't leave it.

PAM
I won't.

Josie hesitates.

Then leaves.

The flame burns unattended.

INT. JOSIE'S CAR - DAY

Engine off.

Josie scrolls.

Stops on: AGED CARE SERVICES

Her thumb hovers.

She locks the phone.

Starts the car.

INT. PAM AND GREG'S HOUSE - NIGHT

Pam turns a flame on.

A beat.

Pam leaves the room.

The flame stays on.

A door slams somewhere.

Draft flicks the flame sideways.
It catches cloth.
Fire spreads.

INT. LIVING ROOM - CONTINUOUS

Greg sniffs.
Looks to the kitchen.

INT. KITCHEN - CONTINUOUS

Smoke.
Pam reaches for the knob.
Her hand slips.
Greg appears behind her. Stops.
The flames grow.

EXT. PAM AND GREG'S HOUSE - NIGHT

Smoke pushes out the front door.
A neighbour shouts somewhere.
Fire engine lights pulse across wet pavement.
Pam and Greg sit wrapped in blankets.
Small.
Greg turns away as firefighters pass.
Josie arrives.
Stops.
Takes it in.

JOSIE
(to herself)
Jesus.

She steps forward.

JOSIE
Are you hurt?

Pam shakes her head.

Greg says nothing.

Behind the fire engine, Patrick arrives.

He sees them.

Doesn't speak.

Starts forward.

Stops.

JOSIE
(to Pam and Greg)
Get in.

They don't move.

GREG
What about-

He gestures toward the house.

JOSIE
Now.

Pam stands.

Greg follows.

Patrick watches them leave.

Doesn't follow.

Josie opens the car door.

Looks back once at the house.

The glow still inside.

She shuts it.

They leave.

INT. JOSIE'S UNIT - NIGHT

Too small.

Pam on the couch.

Greg in a chair.

TV already on.

Josie on the phone.

PATRICK (O.S.)
You took off. I can't help if-

Josie presses her lips together.

PATRICK (O.S.)
We could get someone in. Agency or-

JOSIE
Patrick-

A beat too long.

JOSIE
I'll call you tomorrow.

She hangs up.

Silence drops in.

Pam shifts slightly.

PAM (O.S.)
Josie?

Josie doesn't turn.

Eyes closed.

PAM (O.S.)
What do we do?

Josie stays still.

Doesn't answer.

INT. BDSM DEN - DAY

Controlled space.

Ritual.

Structure.

Josie in her Vixen costume stands over a CLIENT.

The whip moves in measured circles.

Her face slack.

Her arm keeps time.

FLASHES -

- Greg in fire gear.

- Pam folding.

- Patrick crying.

BACK TO SCENE

Josie's jaw tightens.

A sharper strike.

CRACK.

CLIENT (O.S.)
CUCUMBER! CUCUMBER!

The room breaks.

Silence rushes in.

Josie freezes mid-motion.

Looks at the marks on skin.

The whip drops.

CLATTER.

JOSIE
We're done.

INT. TOILET CUBICLE - DAY

Door SLAMS.

Josie sits.

Breathing hard.

Pulls at latex.

It *sticks*, like skin.

She pulls again.

It comes away with a wet snap.
She stands in underwear.
Skin blotched.

JOSIE
(quiet)
I can't hold all of this.

INT. OUTSIDE CUBICLE - DAY

Sniffing. Clothes ruffling.
Josie steps out in jeans and a sweatshirt.
Latex and heels drop into bin.

CLANG.

The lid swings back and forward in the empty room.

HARD CUT TO:

INT. JOSIE'S CAR - AFTERNOON

Engine off.
Phone on speaker.
Tinny HOLD MUSIC.

JOSIE
Yes. I sent that already.

VOICE (V.O.)
I can see the application here.

A pause.

VOICE (V.O.)
Processing time is six weeks.

Josie closes her eyes.

JOSIE
They can't manage six days.

VOICE (V.O.)
I understand.

Beat.

VOICE (V.O.)
Please hold.

Music returns.

INT. PAM AND GREG'S HOUSE - INTERCUT

Greg shouting at the TV.

GREG
That's never a free kick!

Pam at the stove.

The kettle starts to whistle.

She doesn't seem to hear it.

INTERCUT - JOSIE

Another call.

JOSIE
Respite. Temporary. Anything.

VOICE (V.O.)
Not in your catchment area.

JOSIE
Further out?

VOICE (V.O.)
We'll need a GP referral before we
can place you on the waiting list.

Josie hangs up.

INTERCUT - PAM AND GREG'S

Kettle now screaming.

Greg still watching the match.

Pam stands in the noise, unsure what she came in for.

INTERCUT - JOSIE

Silence inside the car.

A family crosses in front of the car.

Parents.

A girl and boy under ten.

Josie pulls a thread on her top. The fabric crimps.

Checks her phone.

MISSED CALLS:

DIANE (3). One voicemail.

She stares at the name.

A long beat.

Then-

JOSIE
Shoreline.

SMASH CUT TO:

INT. JOSIE'S UNIT - NIGHT

Same cramped space.

Worse now.

Patrick wedged between a wall and a sofa bed.

No room to shift.

Josie enters.

Spent.

A long beat.

JOSIE
We can't do this here.

She rubs her forehead.

Drops her hand.

JOSIE
Shoreline.

Patrick looks at her.

PATRICK
No-

JOSIE
It's empty.

PATRICK
That's not-

JOSIE
It's what we've got.

A beat.

He doesn't answer.

EXT. JOSIE'S UNIT - EARLY MORNING

Car being packed.

No system to it.

Just removal.

Doors open. Close.

Silence between movements.

Josie starts the engine.

They leave.

No one looks back.

EXT. SHORELINE ROAD - DAY

The car moves along the coast.

Heavy clouds flatten the light.

Wind bends the dune grass.

Inside-radio off.

No one speaks.

Through the windscreen:

The house appears.

Small.

Solitary.

Weathered.

Not welcoming.

Just there.

EXT. SHORELINE HOUSE - CONTINUOUS

They stop.

Engine off.

No one moves.

Pam gets out first.

Stands. Looking.

Greg follows.

Slower.

Patrick lingers in the car.

Josie is already at the door.

Key in.

It sticks.

She forces it.

The door gives.

INT. SHORELINE HOUSE - CONTINUOUS

Stale air.

Perished window frames.

Covered furniture.

Dust in light.

They enter.

No one claims the space.

Greg reaches for a switch.

Clicks.

Nothing.

Pam moves to the window.

Looks at the sea.

PAM
It's still there.

Josie moves immediately.

JOSIE
Windows.

Pam doesn't respond.

Josie forces one open.

Wood cracks.

Greg stands beside a covered chair.

Touches it.

Stops himself.

A curtain lifts in the light breeze.

For a moment, the room looks almost liveable.

Then falls back into dust.

Josie shakes a box of candles.

JOSIE
Until we're connected.

Beyond the open window, the sea keeps breaking.

INT. SHORELINE HOUSE - NIGHT

Candles around the room.

They sit at an old table.

Basic meal.

They eat.

No one looks at anyone.

Pam eats slowly.

Her eyes drift.

They land on Patrick.

And stay there.

Patrick keeps his head down.

Josie watches him.

Greg chews.

GREG

Not bad.

No response.

A wave breaks outside.

Louder than before.

No one reacts.

INT. SHORELINE HOUSE - DAY

Water under the sink.

Patrick half inside the cupboard.

Josie with tools.

PATRICK

That one.

He fits the wrench.

It gives.

Burst of dirty water.

Hits him full in the face.

He flinches hard.

Drags himself out.

Soaked.

Greg appears.

Holding an empty glass.

GREG

There's no water.

Patrick looks at him.

Water dripping.

Outside, the sea moves steadily.

INT. SHORELINE HOUSE - LATER

Water runs clear.

They notice.

Greg drinks.

Stops.

GREG

Salty.

They all turn away.

INT. SHORELINE HOUSE - AFTERNOON

Patrick on a ladder.

Replacing a bulb.

Greg below.

Lamp on his lap.

On. Off. On. Off.

Fascinated.

Greg picks up pliers.

Holds them.

Patrick doesn't see.

Greg inserts them.

FLASH.

Dark.

Patrick jerks.

Grabs the ladder.

HARD HOLD.

Stops his fall.

Silence.

Patrick climbs down.

Looks at Greg.

Long beat.

PATRICK

Don't.

He goes to the fuse box.

Flick.

Light steadies.

No one speaks.

Patrick returns to the ladder.

EXT. SHORELINE HOUSE - LATE AFTERNOON

Pam and Josie sit facing the sea.

Not speaking.

Wind lifts their hair.

Neither moves.

Josie glances at Pam.

Pam stays fixed on the water.

A wave breaks.

Then another.

Josie exhales.

Looks back out.

EXT. BEACH - LATE AFTERNOON

Greg and Patrick sit on low stools.

Fishing rods out.

Lines slack.

They don't look at each other.

GREG
Never got much here.

Patrick nods.

Wind.

Water.

Greg shifts.

Starts to rise.

PATRICK
Give it a minute.

Greg sits back.

Seagulls wheel over them.

Greg's rod dips.

He frowns.

GREG
...hang on-

It pulls harder.

The rod bends.

Patrick's up.

Pulls in the spare line.

Greg braces.

GREG
No-easy-

PATRICK
We've got it-

They don't.

The line jerks. Greg stumbles.

Then-

Something clicks.

Pull.

Hold.

Give.

Closer.

Silver flashes in the wash.

They drag it onto the sand.

Big.

Thrashing.

They stare.

Then laugh.

Real.

Patrick looks at Greg.

Greg grins wide.

A beat that almost holds.

The fish slows.

Patrick nudges it with his foot.

No reaction now.

GREG

Huh.

PATRICK

Yeah.

They gather their gear.

A wave surges higher up the shore.

They both notice.

Say nothing.

Walk back.

INT. SHORELINE HOUSE - NIGHT

Lamps on.

Clearer now.

Still not comfortable.

They sit apart in the same room.

GREG
I caught a big one.

PATRICK
Yeah.

A flicker of a smile.

Gone.

He drinks.

Opens another.

Pam holds her glass.

Doesn't touch it.

Outside-

A baby crying.

Thin through the wind.

Pam closes her eyes.

The crying stops.

Silence.

Then laughter from another house.

It lands harder.

PATRICK
You never woke up.

JOSIE
Pat-

Pam turns slowly.

PAM
Don't.

PATRICK
I'm saying it.

PAM
Then don't.

PATRICK
You were tired, yeah?

Nothing.

PATRICK
That's what we called it.

Greg shifts.

GREG
Leave it.

PATRICK
We heard her.

Josie looks down.

PATRICK
You didn't.

Pam stands.

PAM
Stop.

Patrick stands too.

PATRICK
We were kids.

GREG
Enough.

PATRICK
No.

A beat.

PATRICK
She wouldn't stop crying.

Josie shakes her head.

JOSIE
Please-

PATRICK
So I picked her up.

Silence drops hard.

Pam pales.

PATRICK

I-

The memories sicken his stomach.

PATRICK

I put her in with you.

A beat.

He can't hold it straight.

PATRICK

Between you.

Pam starts to break.

PAM

No-

He can't stop.

PATRICK

I thought she-

A beat of unbearable silence.

That's it.

Pam collapses into it now.

Greg drops back into his chair.

Josie breaks fully.

Patrick turns away.

His shoulders shake once.

A gust of wind moves through the house.

Pam's glass tips.

SMASH.

Red wine spreads across the floorboards.

No one moves.

CUT TO BLACK.

INT. SHORELINE HOUSE - MORNING

Light floods in.

Too clean.

Too strong.

Josie stands at the sink.

Making coffee.

The spoon circles the black liquid.

Again.

Again.

Greg sits in his chair.

Not asleep.

Not looking at anything.

Pam at the window.

Same place as yesterday.

She turns slightly.

Almost speaks.

Doesn't.

Through a glassless frame, Patrick stands outside.

Looking nowhere.

No one speaks.

EXT. SHORELINE HOUSE - MORNING

Yvonne's car pulls up.

Gravel crunches.

Ella is out before the engine settles.

Yvonne follows.

YVONNE

Nothing.

A beat.

YVONNE

Just clumsy.

Josie nods.

Misses the offer.

Outside, Ella calls out.

Thin in the wind.

Inside, no one turns.

EXT. BEACH - MORNING

Low wind.

Grey light.

Ella at the water's edge.

In. Out. In again.

Yvonne watches.

Not relaxed.

Josie rubs sunscreen into her arms.

Distracted.

Patrick further back, tearing dried seagrass.

Pam and Greg sit side by side.

Watching nothing.

A bigger wave runs in.

Ella steps into it.

The current draws her sideways.

She frowns.

ELLA

Auntie?

Yvonne is up first.

YVONNE

Joze!

Josie looks.

Sees it wrong immediately.

She's moving, running, before she thinks.

JOSIE

Stay there!

She hits the water fast.

Thigh. Waist.

Then she's pulled too.

Ella slips under.

Comes up coughing.

Josie reaches her.

Grabs her.

Tries to turn back.

Can't.

YVONNE

Across! Swim across!

Josie doesn't hear.

Patrick stands frozen.

PATRICK

(to himself)

I can't-

Already backing away with his eyes.

YVONNE

Patrick!

PATRICK

I can't swim.

The water keeps moving without him.

Josie dips under.

Comes up weaker.

Ella cries.

YVONNE

Go!

Something in him breaks forward.

He runs in.

The cold hits instantly.

Force.

No floor.

His feet search for ground that isn't there.

He panics - inhales wrong-chokes, salt burning his throat.

PATRICK

(strangled)

Fuck-

He tries to push forward.

Nothing holds.

He flails, vertical, going nowhere.

No direction. Only resistance.

Something gives.

Not understanding-just panic adjusting itself.

His body stops trying forward.

Starts moving sideways-no choice, instinct, wrong-

It works.

A pocket of movement opens.

He sees them-frenzy of motion.

Not swimming.

He reaches them-barely holding himself up.

Swallowing water, he gets Ella onto him.

Hooks Josie. Barely.

On shore, Yvonne motions.

YVONNE

Greg!

She wades in.

Greg follows.

Pam after him.

They lock arms.

A chain.

Patrick sees them.

Sinking.

Josie and Ella unresponsive.

He lunges.

Pam at the end reaches out.

YVONNE

Pam!

She forces it.

Pain hits.

Her twisted fingers grab Patrick's wrist.

The chain strains.

They drag them in.

Shallows.

Sand.

Bodies collapse in the wash.

EXT. BEACH - CONTINUOUS

Bodies on sand.

Yvonne rolls Josie onto her side.

Water spills from her mouth.

She coughs.

Greg drops beside Ella.
 Starts compressions.
 Compressions. Breath. Again.
 His rhythm slips.

PATRICK

Move.

Patrick takes over.
 Fast. Brutal.

PATRICK

Come on-

Nothing. Then-
 Ella jerks.
 Brine spills.
 A thin breath. Alive.
 Yvonne gathers Ella into her.
 Patrick drops back into the sand.
 Chest heaving.
 Pam stands still-hasn't moved.
 A beat.
 Then small steps.
 She stops beside him.

PAM

(hoarse)
 I thought-

Nothing comes.
 She sinks to her knees.
 Her twisted hands touch his face.
 She looks to the beach house. Then back to him.

PAM

I thought you were safe.

Patrick looks at her.
Sand in his hair.
Breathing hard.
He lifts an arm.
Pulls her in.
She folds against him.
A sound tears out of her.
Josie hears it.
Starts crying.
Real now.
Pam reaches out.
Finds Josie's sleeve.
Pulls her closer.
Greg stands over them.
Then lowers himself into the sand beside them.
No one speaks.
The tide runs in.
Stops short.
Slides back.

FADE TO:

INT. SHORELINE HOUSE - LATE AFTERNOON
Wet footprints across the floor.
Towels.
Discarded clothes.
Ella wrapped in blankets beside Yvonne.
Yvonne watches her chest rise and fall.
Josie at the sink.

Gets in.

The car goes.

They keep watching.

EXT. BEACH - NIGHT

Wind low.

The tide drawing out.

A small fire burns in the sand.

Pam.

Greg.

Josie.

Patrick.

Not in a circle.

Not together.

Only gathered.

No one speaks.

Pam holds a rag-wrapped length of timber.

Wet black with fuel.

She looks at the house.

GREG
We don't have to-

PAM
We do.

A beat.

She lowers the timber into the fire.

It catches.

She starts toward the house.

Josie watches.

Then follows.

Patrick stays.

Looks once to the sea.

Then turns.

Goes after them.

Greg remains a moment longer.

Then follows too.

EXT. SHORELINE HOUSE - CONTINUOUS

The house dark.

Pam presses flame to weathered timber.

Nothing. The wood resists.

Then smoke.

Then a thin line of fire.

She holds it there.

Josie lights another corner.

Patrick tries.

His flame dies.

He tries again.

It catches.

Greg stands back.

Watching.

The fire crawls.

Then runs.

Up the wall.

Through the frame.

Inside.

A crack from within.

Glass bursts outward.

The windows glow.
Flames fill the rooms.

DISSOLVE TO:

EXT. SHORELINE BEACH - DAWN

Grey dawn.
Smoke trails across the dunes.
What's left of the house stands black and open.
Patrick stands alone.
He looks at the ruin in the weak light. Then out to sea.
Light shifts. Morning comes.
His breathing steady - Patrick stays.

EXT. SUBURBAN STREET - DAY

Trees moving lightly.
Patrick rides.
Same rhythm. Different posture-open.
A GIRL (4) pedals toward him on training wheels.

GIRL
It's going to rain later.

PATRICK
Maybe.

Her FATHER follows her, carrying a BABY in a pink blanket.
The baby starts to squall.
Patrick clocks it.
His hands loosen on the handlebar.
Then keeps riding.
They pass.
He slows outside a house.

EXT. MRS KELLY'S HOUSE - CONTINUOUS

He sorts letters. Snaps an elastic band around them.

Footsteps.

He glances up.

Stops.

MS. HAMSEHWANI.

MRS KELLY
You alright?

He looks at her, astonished.

PATRICK
Did you teach...at John Forrest?

Recognition flickers.

MRS KELLY
Years ago.

PATRICK
You gave me a book.

She studies him now.

PATRICK
Poems.

A smile.

MRS KELLY
Did I?

PATRICK
Yeah.
(beat)
Kept some of it.

She nods.

A quiet moment between them.

Patrick steps onto the pedal.

PATRICK
See you then, Ms. H-

She raises a finger-

MRS KELLY

Kelly.

He grins.

A beat.

He pushes off.

Rides on.