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P Ō U R I:
Two Original Screenplays

A creative writing thesis
submitted in partial fulfilment
of the requirements for the degree
of

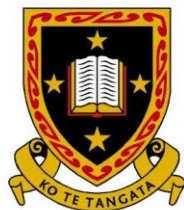
Master of Professional Writing

at

The University of Waikato

by

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THE UNIVERSITY OF
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Te Whare Wānanga o Waikato

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ABSTRACT

Pōuri, as defined on *Te Aka Māori Dictionary*, means “regret, mournful, gloomy, in the dark.” It is an apt description of the following stories: *Unprivate Moments*, and *Haytham; or, The Māori Gothic*. A common thematic tie between the characters is that they regret past actions, have become disheartened, and experience severe distress. As a thesis, the aim is to expand on what a “Māori story” is beyond the familiar, or dare I say, expected.

Unprivate Moments is about an estranged father and son reconciling their differences, disguised as a low-level spy film. I see this as an opportunity to take a well-defined genre and treat it in a realistic fashion in terms of location and character, although not necessarily in believability. Set in Whanganui it can play with many tropes and preconceptions, almost with self-awareness without falling into parody or metacommentary. The formatting does not follow industry standards but inverts the layout of the scene descriptions and dialogue. While I cannot say for certain, Stanley Kubrick is the only one I am aware of that has done this when he adapted *A Clockwork Orange*. His rationale for this break in style was to draw the eye to the visual storytelling rather than the dialogue.

Haytham is centred on a young Byronic Māori man during the late 1880s. Like the archetype he is derived from, Haytham is a tall, dark, and mysterious man. As he reveals himself both to the audience and to the other characters, we come to find someone who has been

damaged and corrupted. This issue of childhood trauma is the central crux of the story and is explored through his relationships with the women in his life. And finally, despite the script's setting and intentional use of familial names, this is not a biographical work.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

Firstly, Dr Ann Hardy has guided myself and this project (including a script I had to leave out) for the past two years. Even when it only began as a collection of ideas, she supported and pushed me to examine and develop them in unexpected ways. I have no doubt that if left to my own devices, the following stories would not be a fraction of what they are now. I feel like my growth over the course of graduate studies is owed to Ann’s expertise and guidance. No matter how many drafts (of which there were **many**) or how many emails I sent, she always found the time to provide detailed responses, in turn, making me want to make it better and better until I ran out of time... And here we are.

Catherine Chidgey, Dr Tracey Slaughter, and the CWRT594 workshop—thanks for putting up with me for the past year and your invaluable feedback. You have all fostered an environment where no idea was outrageous or nonsensical, and yet, there were times where I was encouraged to explain or adjust them. Both Tracey and Catherine have taught me since my second undergraduate year, and both are responsible for developing my love of poetry. It has been a true joy to be under their supervision for this project.

Lastly, to my whānau and tīpuna, whom I wouldn’t be here without, and whose lives and writings have proven to be a great source of inspiration.

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"UNPRIVATE MOMENTS"

Written

by

ANTHONY KOHERE

FOURTH DRAFT
June 28, 2022

OVER BLACK:

SUPER:

PART 1 - THE SPY

FADE IN:

EXT. VICTORIA COURT - DAY (THURSDAY)

A sheltered alley
laced with boutiques,
sushi bar,
and secluded ambiance,
wrapped in
warm bricks and
ironclad windows - a
chic hideaway.

At the END,
above the TABLE with a
solitary MAN,
there is a BALCONY.
A WOMAN leans against
the railing.
A BLONDE WOMAN
with PERAL EARRINGS.
She fits in well.
Classy but subtle -
definitely not a
local.
This is ELLIE BELL
(early 30s, French).

She's watching the
MAN.
He has a camera in his
hands.

She can see his camera
monitor,
and the images he
takes of people.

Ellie backs away
from the railing
and disappears
inside...

... before emerging
from the END STORE.

She passes him,
moves down the alley,
and disappears onto
the street.
He doesn't notice her
while packing up,
before making the same
short journey onto--

EXT. STREETS - CONTINUOUS

People stampede up and
down VICTORIA AVE.

He takes a RIGHT
then another,
cutting through
MAJESTIC SQAURE.
Just some trees and
a small waterfall
that gets pissed
in the wee hours
every Sunday.

He keeps to the side,

out of the way,
unnoticed.

Hanging back, ELLIE
follows--

WOMAN'S POV - STREETS:

The MAN sticks to
side paths,
never going through
the middle.
He makes a LEFT onto
WATT STREET.

At the end,
We see CONCRETE CUBES
stacked six high.
Concrete "X's" brace
the windows.
The MAN enters the
brutalist building.

We stop on the
footpath.

We look down at our
WRISTWATCH,
a stylish silver
piece.
(It reads: 12:03 P.M.)

QUICK DISSOLVE TO:

(It reads: 12:13 P.M.)
We look up--
The MAN exits the
brutalist building,

crosses the ROAD,
and jogs up the small
hill.

We move forward.
Before us is the
MUSEUM to the LEFT,
WAR MEMORIAL HALL to
the RIGHT,
and beyond them,
VETERAN STEPS,
and at the top of the
hill,
SARJEANT GALLERY.

BACK TO SCENE:

INT. SARJEANT GALLERY - MINUTES LATER

White walls and
ceiling
mix of hard lines
soft curves
carving belly of bare
canvas and skylights.
Rosewood floor laid
octagonally
Cross compass points
lead to hallways,
'round corners,
linking space
together.

Above the archway
directly ahead is a
BANNER (it reads:
"[un]Private Moments")

Ellie enters,
and sees the MAN at
the END WALL with
another WOMAN.

Ellie scans the room,
no GUARDS,
no CAMERAS in the
ceiling corners.
She drifts to
the LEFT,
perusing the artworks.

INT. SARJEANT GALLERY, WEST WING - CONTINUOUS

The walls are filled
with PORTRAITS and
PAINTINGS,
curious scenes of
watching and being
watched.

Ellie focuses on one
particular portrait,
feeling EYES on her.

She turns--
and looks directly
at the MAN
with his CAMERA.
This is ĪHĀIA BENNETT
(34, Māori).

He freezes like a
spotlighted animal...

... until she smiles
and waves.

There's a reason she's
so relaxed.

He moves towards her,
reeled in.

Ellie: Are you an admirer?

He glances at the
PORTRAIT – framed with
the recognisable
silhouette of
binoculars,
a silky white spathe,
dripping with dew is
wrapped 'round
a stiff bud.
It's got nothing to
hide and sucked dry
of all colour...

... like a
Mapplethorpe,
only cheaper.

Īhāia: I am.

Ellie: Any piece of you in here?

Īhāia: I'm at the end.

Ellie: You'll have to show me.

*The sound of ringing
interrupts--*

A beat.

Realisation,
he whips out his
PHONE.

Īhāia: (into phone) Hello. (beat) Janet? (beat) What?! (to Ellie)
Sorry.

He leaves her
in the dust--

Īhāia: (Cont'd; into phone) No, no, I'm coming!

--out the door
and out of sight.

Ellie remains behind,
a feeling of
"the prey is escaping"
grows with every
frantic step he takes.

EXT. ROYAL OPERA HOUSE - LATER

A behemoth of white
weatherboard,
gold window trims,
and pillars supporting
the upper balcony.
The last Victorian
theatre.

Ellie climbs the steps
passing a sign (it
reads: "Open Recital")
as she enters--

INT. OPERA HOUSE - AUDITORIUM - CONTINUOUS

*The thunderous boom
of classical music
plays as
Ellie moves down the
walkway,
flanked by ROWS of RED
CHAIRS.*

On the STAGE is an
ORCHESTRA,
focused on the music.
There is a spattering
of PEOPLE 'round the
hall.

Ellie slips down next
to an OLDER WOMAN,
in the middle of the
row.
This is COLONEL
LAVIGNE (mid-60s,
English).

Col. Lavigne: How did he look?

Ellie: Much like his photo, ma'am.

Col. Lavigne: And...?

Ellie: I made contact, ma'am.

Col. Lavigne: And...?

Ellie: He was called away. I couldn't press him.

Col. Lavigne: Then *remind* him. (beat) And then pump him for its
location.

Ellie: Oh, yes, ma'am. Pumping is my profession.

Col. Lavigne: That's it.

Ellis slips out of the
chair
and out the hall.

Col. Lavigne picks up
a BOTTLE of EVIAN
SPRING WATER
from the floor.
She cracks the CAP--

MATCH CUT TO:

INT. PARIS, HOTEL - ELEVATOR - NIGHT (FOUR YEARS AGO)

LIQUID from a popped
champagne bottle
SPLASHES onto the
elevator wall.

ELLIE,
in a silver dress that
barely covers
anything,
chugs the champagne
bottle.

The only other
occupant of the
elevator is
LIEUTENANT-GENERAL
McVEIGH (mid-60s,
English), in his crisp
DRESS UNIFORM with all

the bells and whistles
and medals.

While she's all over
the bottle, he's all
over her.

Ellie: Money first.

He *grunts* in response.

Ding.

The DOORS open.
Ellie swipes the ROOM
CARD from him and
bolts--

Lt Gen. McVeigh: (Cont'd) Oi!

INT. HOTEL - HALLWAY - CONTINUOUS

McVeigh exits the
elevator to see Ellie
slinking down the
hallway, waving the
room card at him.

She stops at a door,
slots the card in,
and enters,
leaving the door open.

McVeigh quickens the
pace.

INT. HOTEL - McVEIGH'S ROOM - LATER

Ellie,

naked,
is bent over on the
bed.
Lt Gen. McVeigh stands
behind her,
thrusting with all
he's got.
She's "moaning" and
making all the right
noises but her face
doesn't show any
pleasure.

With one final *grunt*,
he finishes,
nearly collapsing on
her.
She pushes him off and
crosses the room,
opening a door and
entering the--

INT. HOTEL - BATHROOM - CONTINUOUS

She's immediately
knocked out by an
UNSEEN MAN hiding
behind the DOOR.

END FLASHBACK

SMASH OUT.

OVER BLACK:

*The wistful chords of
a piano creep in,
leading to a slow*

jazz song.

FADE IN:

INT. SARGEANT GALLERY - NIGHT (FRIDAY)

Through a sea of
rural-urban pomp,
not quite Black Tie
but more than Red
Bands and Hoodies,
ELLIE cuts through
in TONAL GREYS,
her BLONDE HAIR
DONE UP,
PEARL EARRINGS.
Cold sophistication.

She weaves through the
crowds,
blending in and
sticking out
by being alone.

In the CENTRE of the
MAIN ROOM,
she catches sight of
an OLD MAN
conversating with
ĪHĀIA.

She slinks closer but
out of their line of
sight.
They seem to be
getting along.

The OLD MAN departs
and disappears into
the crowds.

Now, it's her turn.

She closes the
distance.

Ellie: Mr Bennett, can I trouble you?

ĪHĀIA turns to her.
He scrubbed up well.

Ellie: (Cont'd) Will you show me yours?

She leads him,
weaving around
clusters of wine
drinkers
to his UNSEEN ARTWORK
at the END WALL.

Īhāia: Did we meet--

Ellie: (hushed) You don't know me. (loud) What is this style
called? It's very... interesting.

She looks around,
as if scanning
the room.

Īhāia: Looking for someone?

She turns back to the
artwork and points to
it.

Ellie: Don't look, in fact look (to the unseen artwork) here.
(hushed) There are men in this room who don't belong, men who are watching us.

Īhāia: (laughs) What?

As if reflex
he moves to look--
She puts a hand on his
shoulder
refocuses him

Īhāia: (Cont'd) Who?

Ellie: People you don't want to leave here with.

Īhāia: You're French, right? I know how much you love wine--

Ellie: (strong) Listen. (beat) Stay calm. Remain until the end and slip out with the crowd.

Īhāia: Why?

Ellie: I'll guide you to me.

Īhāia: Why?

A beat.

He looks to her--
She's gone.

He looks around...

... No sign of her.

EXT. SARGEANT GALLERY/QUEENS PARK - CONTINUOUS

Ellie glides down
the six steps,
scanning her
surroundings.

She crosses the ROAD
and descends the
VETERANS STEPS...

... coming to the
jam-packed CARPARK
between the MUSEUM and
MEMORIAL HALL.

She approaches a wimpy
ELECTRIC CAR and
enters--

INT/EXT. ELLIE'S CAR (STATIONARY) - CARPARK - CONTINUOUS

Just as she closes the
DOOR--
She glimpses ĪHĀIA
exiting the GALLERY.

She quickly but calmly
dials her PHONE.

A beat.

Ellie: (into Phone) I told you to wait until the end.

She sees him standing
on the GALLERY steps,
frantically looking
around.

Īhāia's Voice: (Phone, panicked) Are you watching me?!

Ellie: (into Phone) Stay calm. Come to me.

She turns the DIMMER
SWITCH back and forth,
the HEADLIGHTS
can be seen
blinking ON and OFF.

He sees and descends
the VETERANS STEPS.

He looks out...

... Nothing.

Looks behind...

... MEN exit the
GALLERY in a hurry
towards HIM--

He sprints down the
remaining steps,
frantically pursued to
the CARPARK.

He narrowly enters her
CAR--
They drive away.

INT/EXT. IHĀIA'S CAR (MOVING) - STREETS - CONTINUOUS

As Ellie pulls the
car out,
a BLACK SUV sits
outside 'X' to the
RIGHT.

She goes LEFT onto
DREWS AVE.

Suddenly,
the Black SUV follows,
hanging back.
Ellie looks in the
REARVIEW,
rounds the corner,
down the hill
comes to the
DREWS AVE-RIDGEWAY ST
INTERSECTION.

Each lane is occupied
by a SUV.
She speeds ahead...

... only to be
stopped by a
POLICE CHECKPOINT.

The Black SUV
stops behind them.

COP approaches.

Ellie rolls her
window down.

Cop: Breathalyser check. Had any alcohol tonight?

Ellie: No.

Cop holds out
BREATHALYSER.

Cop: Do me a favour, blow on that until I tell you to stop. (beat)
Keep blowing. Keep blowing. Keep blowing--

Īhāia looks in the
SIDE MIRROR,
The SUV behind them is
so close he can see
it's packed inside.
Full of HARD MEN.
He looks back,
Over his seat--

Cop: (Cont'd) Keep blowing. Keep blowing. Keep blowing--

Catches the Cop's
attention,
who follows his line
of sight--

Īhāia snaps back, as
if caught.
He wasn't subtle.

Cop: (Cont'd) And... Stop. (beat) Alright, you're all good.

Ellie gets an idea,
a way out.

Ellie: Do you see the truck behind us? I think we're being
followed.

Cop looks,
sees the suspicious
SUV.

Cop: You sure?

She nods.

Cop: (Cont'd) Go on through.

Cop moves
towards the SUV.

Coast is clear.

Ellie accelerates,
checks REARVIEW...

... No one's
following.
Īhāia exhales.

She turns RIGHT onto
TAUPO QUAY.
He keeps checking the
SIDE MIRROR...

... No one follows.

She turns RIGHT onto
HILL STREET.

They continue down the
eerie, empty streets.

She turns the VOLUME
DIAL...
*Gentle chords tumble
in,
followed by a slow
slurring woman's voice
from SpaceGhostPurrp's
"Diamonds Pt.2
Instrumental"*
(we hear the lyrics:
*"Ashamed / Be ashamed
/ Ashamed / Inside"*)

Ellie glances at
Īhāia,
who keeps looking out
his window.

Reflected streetlights
pass overhead.

EXT. SAFEHOUSE - LATER (NIGHT)

ELLIE and ĪHĀIA pull
up to a FANCY HOUSE
across the road from
VIRGINIA LAKE.
No lights on inside,
no sign of life.

Īhāia: Your place?

Ellie pushes on
to FRONT DOOR,
unlocks it...

... Hand on door,
she looks at him,
expectantly.

Ellie: Do you prefer under the bridge?

INT. SAFEHOUSE - SECRET ROOM - CONTINUOUS

THREE MEN are packed
into this BROOM CLOSET
squished together with
SOUND-DAMPENING FOAM
coating the walls.
They're blocking a

large ONE-WAY MIRROR.
Whatever's on the
other side,
it can't be seen.

Two Men are seated,
one mans a FILM
CAMERA, the other has
HEADPHONES on,
the third (the OLD MAN
from the GALLERY)
merely watches.

Īhāia's Voice: (through Headphones) I want some answers.

Ellie's Voice: (through Headphones) How about a game? I'll ask,
and for every satisfying answer, I'll unwrap your prize. (beat)
Sit on the bed.

The sound of rustling.

Ellie's Voice: (Cont'd, through Headphones) Do you know who I am,
have we ever met before today?

Īhāia's Voice: (through Headphones) I don't think so.

The sound of rustling.

Ellie's Voice: (through Headphones) Did you recognise the old man
that approached you tonight?

Īhāia's Voice: (through Headphones) I met him today... in the
library.

The sound of rustling.

Ellie's Voice: (through Headphones) And what did you talk about?

Īhāia's Voice: (through Headphones) Birds.

The sound of rustling.

Ellie's Voice: (through Headphones) Last one. Do you want to leave?

Īhāia's Voice: (through Headphones) No.

*The sound of rustling,
groaning,
moaning.*

Ellie's Voice: (through Headphones) Do you trust me?

Īhāia's Voice: (through Headphones) What's your name?

Ellie's Voice: (through Headphones) Ellie. My name is Ellie.

FADE OUT.

FADE IN:

INT. SAFEHOUSE - HALLWAY - LATER (NIGHT)

ELLIE,
wrapped in a
ruffled SHEET,
closes a DOOR
behind her.

The OLD MAN exits the
next room,
meets her halfway.
This is OLD DREIBERG
(late 60s, English).

Ellie: Did you get all that?

He nods.

Ellie: (Cont'd) I'm done.

Old Dreiberg: Once I get it.

Ellie: You said--

Old Dreiberg: You still have time to work off. You want it expedited? Bring it to me.

A beat.

That wasn't what she
wanted to hear.

Ellie: What about him?

Old Dreiberg: We'll dump him by the river. He'll think he had too good of a night to make it home. (beat) Get dressed.

EXT. 'X' BUILDING - MORNING (SATURDAY)

Ellie approaches the
entrance.

It's dead quiet.

INT. 'X' BUILDING - APARTMENT - CONTINUOUS

She moves through the
space,
swift and silent.

She spots the
PERFORATED CEILING
TILES above the DESK.
She stands on it,
pushes one TILE open.

Feels around...

... But finds nothing.

She hops down,
opens DRAWERS,
searches...

... Still nothing.

She goes through
the flat,
opening doors,
looking for
something...

... and finds it:
a STEPLADDER.

She stacks it on the
desk,
climbs up,
and peeks into the
CEILING--
There's nothing but
Pink Batts.

EXT. 'X' BUILDING - MINUTES LATER

Ellie exits in a rush,
towards her CAR.

Ellie: He lied.

Old Dreiberg's Voice: (Phone) What?!

Ellie: Never mind. Where'd you leave him, by the river?

Clearly pissed,
she TIGHTLY GRIPS the
car DOOR HANDLE--

MATCH CUT TO:

INT. HOTEL - McVEIGH'S ROOM - NIGHT (FOUR YEARS AGO)

A lithe hand TIGHTLY
GRIPS a BLOODY KNIFE.

*The sound of THUMPING
WOOD,
incessant,
like someone's
knocking on a door.*

Ellie wakes,
groggy and slow to
move.
She's covered in
blood,
only she hasn't
noticed yet.

*The knocking at the
door continues.*

She sees the BLOOD on
her naked body
and on the carpet
leading to McVeigh's
corpse.
His slit throat has
leaked a pool of blood
out.

She finally sees the
KNIFE held in her own
hand--

The DOOR is UNLOCKED
and bursts open--
and several PARIS
POLICEMEN barrel into
the room.
They are all
momentarily taken
aback by all the blood
before aiming their
PISTOLS at her.

Policeman: (English Subtitles) [Drop the knife!]

Ellie looks from the
body to the Policemen,
as if she doesn't
understand what's
happening.

Ellie: (English Subtitles) [No, I didn't do this!]

Policeman: (English Subtitles) [Drop it and lay down!]

She biffs the knife to
the side before
hesitantly laying down
on the bloodstained
carpet.

Policeman: (Cont'd, English Subtitles) [Cuff her and get a
blanket.]

INT. PARIS, POLICE STATION - INTERVIEW ROOM - LATER (MORNING)

Ellie,
handcuffed and dressed
in baggy GREY SWEATS,
sits at a round table
surrounded by grey
walls and not much
else.

The door opens
and in walks COL.
LAVIGNE.
She sits down across
from Ellie.

Ellie: (English Subtitles) [Who are you?]

Col. Lavigne: My French is rather limited, is your English the
same?

A beat.

Ellie: You're English. Are you another detective?

Col. Lavigne: No.

Ellie: I didn't kill him.

Col. Lavigne: Yes, this is all an embarrassing misunderstanding.
Lieutenant-General McVeigh was a thief and traitor. He killed
himself.

Ellie glances to the
one-way mirror.

Col. Lavigne: There's no one but us. (beat) I have an offer, if
you'll accept, to work for me.

Ellie: Why me?

Col. Lavigne: Well, for starters you don't need to be taught how to seduce a target. That's something soldiers have trouble with. (beat) And for the foreseeable future, I own you... Wouldn't be the first.

Col. Lavigne
abruptly stands up,
and moves to the door.
She opens it and looks
back at Ellie.

Old Dreiberg: (Cont'd) Unless you'd rather stay?

Ellie follows her out.
Col. Lavigne CLOSES
THE DOOR.

END FLASHBACK

MATCH CUT TO:

EXT. WAIMARIE RIVERBOAT (MOVING) - RIVER - LATE MORNING (SATURDAY)

THE CABIN DOOR OPENS.
Col. Lavigne leads
Old Dreiberg out
onto the DECK,
next to the big
PADDLE WHEEL.

Col. Lavigne: The boy ate from the honey jar and still kept his wits. We could use more like him.

Old Dreiberg: The girl failed.

Col. Lavigne: A Bennett made you look a fool. What a surprise. You cocked it up then, you cocked it up now.

Old Dreiberg: I'll get it back.

Col. Lavigne: When, another thirty years?

The boat approaches
the DOCK.
Lavigne's the first
one off.

FADE OUT.

OVER BLACK:

SUPER:

PART 2 - THE SON

FADE IN:

EXT. VICTORIA COURT - DAY (THURSDAY)

A sheltered alley
laced with boutiques,
sushi bar,
and secluded ambiance,
wrapped in
warm bricks and
ironclad windows - a
chic hideaway.

Above,
unseen by him,
ELLIE watches from the
BALCONY.

IHĀIA sits at the end
TABLE.

He has a CAMERA in his
hands.

He watches its SCREEN
as people ENTER AND
EXIT THE FRAME--

STORE FRONTS (THROUGH CAMERA) :

A WOMAN licks
ice cream,
her tongue darts
the top scoop off
the cone--

Click.

The SCREEN freezes for
a second,
capturing the IMAGE.

We shift the CAMERA
away...

... a MAN grabs
doorknob.
Pulls it.
Won't budge.
Again with force.
Still nothing.
Puts his all into it--

Click.

Another PICTURE is
taken.

Inside the store,
a Worker PULLS
door open,
welcoming smile.

BACK TO SCENE :

He packs up,
doesn't notice ELLIE
pass him
and down the ALLEY.
He makes the same
short journey onto--

EXT. STREETS - CONTINUOUS

People stampede up and
down VICTORIA AVE.

He takes a RIGHT
then another,
cutting through
MAJESTIC SQAURE.
Just some trees and
a small waterfall
that gets pissed
in the wee hours
every Sunday.

He keeps to the side,
out of the way,
unnoticed.

Hanging back,
ELLIE follows--

Īhāia sticks to
side paths,
never going through
the middle.
He makes a LEFT onto
WATT STREET.

At the end is a
familiar brutalist
building.
Īhāia enters it.

INT. 'X' BUILDING - VARIOUS - CONTINUOUS

ELEVATOR:

Īhāia enters the metal
box
Presses "6"
doors close.

He leans on the carpet
walls...

INSERT: FLOOR SCREEN

3

4

5

END INSERT

It chugs to a stop
Ding.
Doors open.
He exits...

APARTMENT:

... Enters abode.
A sprawling space
filled with

books and books and
music and not whole
lot else.

Except for art.
Rows of frames are
lined up in corner,
backs turned in shame.

A large WHITE SHEET
shrouds SOMETHING
hanging on the wall.

He sits at desk on the
other side of room.
Plugs CAMERA
to LAPTOP,
taps keyboard.
PRINTER beeps and
boops to life,
spits out OBSCURED
IMAGES.
He takes them--
Lifts SHEET--
Fills the UNSEEN
ARTWORK with the
latest PIECES...

... He steps back and
inspects his work.
No pride or joy,
rather vacant.

EXT. SARJEANT GALLERY - MINUTES LATER

Across one road,
A stone's throw from
"X",

light jog up
 tiny hill,
 'cross another road,
 Īhāia ascends
 six steps.
 CAMERA in hand.

He passes an OLD MAN
 WITH MONOCULAR - it's
 OLD DREIBERG.

INT. SARJEANT GALLERY - CONTINUOUS

He enters a familiar
 space of white walls,
 rosewood floors,
 and cross compass
 points that lead to
 hallways and
 'round corners,
 linking the entire
 space together.

Above the archway
 directly ahead is a
 BANNER (it reads:
 "[un]Private Moments")

He passes through the
 archway to the
END WALL.

It only has a BARE
 CANVAS and a small
 PLAQUE (it reads:
 ĪHĀIA BENNETT - "AFTER
 SMOOTH OPERATORS").

A WOMAN is eyeing the
empty wall,
pensive.
This is MEL (mid-30's,
Samoan).

Īhāia sidles up next
to her.
She eyes him.

Mel: Where is it, Īhāia?

Īhāia: It's almost finished.

Mel: Take a look around.

The walls are FILLED
with PORTRAITS and
PAINTINGS,
SCULPTURES on podiums.
A full house
except
for
this
one
wall.

Mel: (Cont'd) I gave you weeks-- No, months to prepare. I haven't
seen one pixel of it yet.

Īhāia: I know--

Mel: This whole show was *your* idea. Don't leave that wall gaping
and make me look like an arsehole.

A beat...

... to make sure she's
done.

Īhāia: I'll finish it.

She isn't convinced or
even assured,
but she lets it go.
She's said what needed
to be said.

She takes out a FLYER
from her pocket.

Mel: (hands him a FLYER) Don't ask for a second 'cause there ain't
any left.

He inspects it--

INSERT: FLYER

Simple and clean.
(it reads:
"[un]Private Moments")
above an
EYE peeping through
KEYHOLE
list of artists
where and when,
the usual B.S.

Mel: (O.S) Is your mum coming?

Īhāia: (O.S) Nah, she tried but can't make it.

Mel: (O.S) What about your dad?

END INSERT

He shakes his head.

He pockets the flyer,
rounds the corner...

Mel: I want it on the wall tonight!

... and comes to a
stop.

At the other end of
the long,
unbroken hall
is ELLIE.
He's finally noticed
the woman who's
noticed him.

She's gazing at a
large PORTRAIT hanging
on the wall.

He brings up his
CAMERA--

GALLERY, WEST WING (THROUGH CAMERA):

An extreme wide,
entire length of
hall is in frame
We zoom in...

Full body is in frame,
she slowly sways her
head side to side
We zoom in...

Medium shot,
above the waist.
She leans in,
focused on
the portrait.
We zoom in...

Only her head and
shoulders are in
frame.

She brushes her hair
behind ear--

Click.

The screen freezes as
we capture the moment.

She turns and--

Click.

looks directly at us--

Click.

BACK TO SCENE:

Īhāia freezes like a
spotlighted animal...

... until she smiles
and waves.
There's a reason she's
so relaxed.

He moves towards her,
reeled in.

Ellie: Are you an admirer?

He glances at the
PORTRAIT – an unsubtle
innuendo.

Īhāia: I am.

Ellie: Any piece of you in here?

Īhāia: I'm at the end.

Ellie: You'll have to show me.

*The sound of ringing
interrupts--*

A beat.

Realisation,
he whips out his
PHONE.

Īhāia: (into phone) Hello. (beat) Janet? (beat) What?! (to Ellie)
Sorry.

He leaves her
in the dust--

Īhāia: (Cont'd; into phone) No, no, I'm coming!

--out the door
and out of sight.

EXT. BENNETT HOME - FRONT YARD - LATER

Smoke plumes above
the treeline.
Īhāia races out of the
car,
follows the trail back
to the source--

a STEEL DRUM besides
the GARAGE.

An OLDER MAN dumps
cardboard boxes into
the whipping FLAMES.

A cigar hangs out of
his mouth,
he has white hair,
grizzled lines,
and a stiff back.
This is ĀNARU BENNETT
(mid-60s, Māori).

Īhāia: Dad, what are you doing?

Īhāia gets no reply,
so he grabs the box
from his Father's
hands

...tug of war...
until the sides rip--
PHOTOS tumble out and
are devoured by the
fire.

Īhāia tries to pluck
them out,
grasps ash.
He rescues the rest of
the box.

Īhāia: What are you doing?!

He looks inside the
box--

INSERT: BROKEN BOX

PHOTOS of Īhāia
and his Parents
(mostly with Mum)
The "Happy Years".
Birthdays,
holidays,
music recitals,
graduation.
Boy to a young man.

END INSERT

Īhāia: (Cont'd) These--

He looks up...

... and is alone--

--FRONT DOOR
slams shut.

Over the neighbouring
FENCE,
unseen by Īhāia,
an OLD WOMAN
watches him stand on
the LAWN,
hesitant,
before moving towards
the HOUSE.

INT. BENNETT HOME - KITCHEN - CONTINUOUS

Īhāia enters,
holding the ripped
BOX.

Ānaru flicks on the
GLASS ELECTRIC JUG. A
single CUP beside it.

Īhāia places the box
on the bench--

INSERT: ELECTRIC JUG

Blue LEDs light up the
bottom rim.
*A deep staccato
rumble...*

Īhāia: (O.S) Dad.

Old Ānaru: (O.S) I've told you for years to get rid of them.

Bubbles spiral up,
break the surface,
escape as steam.
*Rumble intensifies.
Higher pitch slides
over top...
rising,
keeps rising...*

Īhāia: (O.S) "Get rid of them?" This is my life.

Old Ānaru: (O.S) It's been sitting in a box going nowhere!

Īhāia: (O.S) They're *my* photos.

Bubbles bounce
dangerously,
a continuous stream of
steam--

Īhāia: (Cont'd; O.S) Dad. Dad!

*Pitches rise higher
for the climax--*

Old Ānaru: (O.S) Oh, fuck's sake. Shut up!

END INSERT

Ānaru storms out.
He couldn't care less
about tea now.

A long beat.

Īhāia takes out an
e-cig
Inhale...
steady
Exhale...
waft of vapour.

Takes FLYER
out of pocket.
He looks at it--

A beat.

Scrunches it,
and biffs it right in
the bin,
a METAL BIN with a
mirror-shine--
In the reflection,
he spots a GAP in the
CEILING--

He looks up and sees

the CEILING HATCH
ajar.

INT. BENNETT HOME - KITCHEN CEILING - CONTINUOUS

Īhāia pops up,
looks 'round,
nothing out of the
ordinary...

... Pink Batts,
intact wires,
no mouse droppings--

and a SHOE BOX.

He grabs it and climbs
down.

INT. BENNETT HOME - KITCHEN - CONTINUOUS

Back on the ground,
he opens the lid
to find a single
CASSETTE TAPE,
and a WALKMAN.

He eyes the tape's
label,
(it reads: "BALLAD")

A beat.

He chucks it and the
walkman into the
ripped box and
carries the whole
thing out.

EXT. BENNETT HOME - FRONT YARD - CONTINUOUS

Īhāia walks down the
driveway,
lined on LEFT
with feijoa trees.

The OLD WOMAN pops
up over fence to
the RIGHT.
This is JANET (early
60s, Pākehā).

Janet: I'm sorry, Īhāia. I didn't catch him soon enough.

He diverts across
the lawn,
passes the smouldering
STEEL DRUM besides the
GARAGE,
to the FENCE.

Īhāia: It's alright.

Janet: What was he burning?

Īhāia: (shrugs) Rubbish.

She glances into the
BOX,
sees the CHARRED
PHOTOS,
but also glimpses the
TAPE and WALKMAN--
Īhāia shifts the box
in his arms,
closing the lid.

Janet: I was thinking about calling Hera.

Īhāia: No, it's not that bad.

Janet: I'll keep an eye on him.

He nods and walks back
across the lawn.

INT. 'X' BUILDING - APARTMENT - LATER (DUSK)

Out the windows,
electric blue hues the
sky.

Īhāia's at his DESK.
the TAPE and WALKMAN
rest on top of it.
He opens the opens
BATTERY hatch--
EMPTY... could be
worse.

Opens drawer,
slaps AAs in.
Hits "PLAY" and holds
it up to his ear...

*... mechanical churn,
motors turn--*
He hits "STOP",
satisfied.

He moves to the
AMPLIFIER,
takes an AUX CHORD and
plugs it into

the Walkman's
 HEADPHONE jack.
 He flicks "POWER" to
 "ON".
 Increases "VOLUME"
 dial.
 Slides in TAPE
 "BALLAD".
 Hits "PLAY"...

*... mechanical churn,
 motors turn,
 speakers puff with
 crisp static--*

Female's Voice: (Tape) "<distortion> --March 20, 1987. For the purpose of this documentation, any visual recording has been prohibited until further notice. <distortion> The aforementioned plan has not been exposed to the eyes and ears of the "Home," or "War" offices. However, despite these precautions we have monitored an increase in French traffic. We suspect infiltrators... Will have to keep an eye on them. <click>"

The tape stops.
 Ihāia sits,
 confused,
 unsure of what he
 heard.

Hits "REWIND"...

*... mechanical twirl,
 motors whirl--
 Click.*

"PLAY"

EXT. WELLINGTON, STREET (THROUGH NEWS CAMERA) - MORNING (1987)

OVERCAST SKY
 sours with greys
 and sullied whites.
 A WOMAN stands in the
 middle of a POLICE-
CORDONED STREET,
 holding a MICROPHONE,
 in a thick woollen
 coat,
 trying not to shiver
 on CAMERA.
 This is SUSAN (about
 30, NEWS Reporter)

Behind her is the
 BRITISH HIGH
 COMMISSION.
 A cold building hiding
 what's inside with
 drawn blinds.

Susan talks into the
CAMERA, clear and
 level.

Susan: Good morning. It's day four of this unfathomable crisis
 unfolding behind me, and still, the terrorists have yet to specify
 demands while they continue to hold hostages--

A SERIES OF SHARP
 EXPLOSIONS from inside
 the HIGH COMMISSION--
 The CAMERA juts
around, shaking until
returning still--

SMOKE rises from the
High Commission's
REAR--
Terrifying GUNFIRE--

Susan panics,
looks behind the
camera--

Susan: Pete?! Pete, are you alright? What was that? (looks to
building) Oh my God! Was that them or us?!

The screen freezes,
as if someone hit
"PAUSE"...

... it frantically
reverses,
as if someone hit
"REWIND"--

INT. ALEXANDER HERITAGE LIBRARY - DAY (PRESENT, FRIDAY)

We pull back...

... revealing it's
playing on a TV
SCREEN.

ĪHĀIA'S tucked in a
quiet corner next
to a humming
MICROFICHE VIEWER.

Hits "EJECT", and the
VHS TAPE pops out of
the PLAYER.

He eyes the label (it
reads: "MARCH 30,
1987).

He places it on the
TABLE next to the
WALKMAN and WIRED
HEADPHONES,
and sits down at the
MICROFICHE VIEWER.

INSERT: MICROFICHE VIEWER

The New Zealand Herald
Wednesday - April 1,
1987

"SMOOTH OPERATORS"
(large IMAGE of a
masked SOLDIER atop a
ladder bridge)

"SAS save hostages
spare no terrorists"

END INSERT

"BIRDS OF NEW ZEALAND"
book *slams* the table.
MONOCULAR slides
up to WALKMAN.
OLD DREIBERG takes a
seat next to Īhāia.

Old Dreiberg: Excuse me. (points to Walkman) I haven't seen one of those in years. Pain in the arse to deal with. All those buttons, and none of them ever did more than one job. You should use a "Dot M-P-Three". It's like a "J-PEG" but for music.

Īhāia smiles,

a real one.
He finds the Old Man's
rambling amusing.

Īhāia: Thanks. This is research.

Old Dreiberg: On how far we've come?

Īhāia: More family, less technical.

Old Dreiberg: You're not telling me your grandfather's father
created the cassette tape?

Īhāia: (laughs) No. (looks at book and monocular) You a bird
watcher?

Old Dreiberg: Trying to be. Book helps sell it. (beat) Keeping one
eye open.

Īhāia: Didn't know it was a popular thing here.

Old Dreiberg: Best to do it from a distance, that way they don't
know you're watching them.

Īhāia: Makes sense.

Īhāia looks at his
WRISTWATCH (it reads:
16:47).

Īhāia: (Cont'd) Shit!

He packs up in a jiff,
swipes Walkman off the
table.

Old Dreiberg: Young man, where's the fire?!

Īhāia: Oh no, no, I'm just late for something. Good luck with the birds.

He bolts,
as the screen splits:

**(LEFT) INT. LIBRARY -
DREIBERG'S POV**

We follow
as fast as we can,
which isn't
that quick,
towards the exit--

(RIGHT) INT. LIBRARY

Īhāia
quickly moves through
the space...

**(LEFT) EXT. QUEENS PARK -
DREIBERG'S POV**

We descend six steps,
turn RIGHT,
and stop at top of
HILL.

We bring up the
MONOCULAR--

(RIGHT) EXT. QUEENS PARK

He strides down six
steps,
turn RIGHT...
walk down tiny hill...

**(LEFT) 'X' BUILDING (THROUGH
MONOCULAR) :**

Extreme wide,
can barely see Īhāia.
We zoom in...

He's crossing the road.
We zoom in...

...and across one road
to--

(RIGHT) 'X' - FOYER

Īhāia opens the door--
 Now out of view.
 We tilt up...

He quickly enters--

(RIGHT) 'X' - ELEVATOR

X's on X's
 nothing but cold
 concrete and
 gutter grass...

Presses "6"...

Ding.

Doors open to--

Movement in the TOP
 CUBES.

(RIGHT) 'X' - APARTMENT

We zoom in...

He races to change
 into PLAID SHIRT,
 TWEED JACKET.

Can barely make ĪHĀIA
 out as he
 passes the shrouded
 windows,
 lots of movement
 back and forth--

 We pull the Monocular
 away--

Rolls unseen artwork
 into DRAWING TUBE.

He carries it to,
 and re-enters
 ELEVATOR.

END SPLIT-SCREEN:

EXT. 'X' BUILDING - MINUTES LATER

Īhāia emerges
 in a rush,
 the DRAWING TUBE slung
 over his shoulder.

He crosses the road,
 back up the hill,
 passes no one on short
 trip.

INT. SARGEANT GALLERY - CONTINUOUS

He steps into a
buzz of activity and
last-minute changes.

MEL notices him
immediately.

He cuts down the
middle,
through the archway,
to the END WALL.

He pulls the CANVAS
off the wall,
opens DRAWING TUBE,
and pulls out large,
glossy MONOCHROME
SHEETS.

He pieces them onto
the CANVAS...

... and pulls
something from his
pocket,
and slips it to the
back of the CANVAS.

He hangs the unseen
artwork back onto the
WALL as MEL joins him.

He grins at her as he
nods to his finished
work.

A beat.

She's hard to read as
she takes it in.

Mel: Hmm.

Īhāia: I know. I should've left them in colour.

Mel: I should've checked with the lawyer.

Īhāia: Little uproar might not be a bad thing.

Mel: I'll try not think to about it. (beat) Listen, you have to stay for this one. Period. You're not sneaking off like every other time.

Īhāia: Give me a break.

Mel: (not amused) No.

DISSOLVE TO:

LATER:

*The wistful chords of
a piano creep in,
leading to a slow
jazz song.*

Īhāia circulates,
buzzed from his
champagne,
moving through masses
of swollen stomachs
and sagging chests.

Not quite Black Tie
but more than Red
Bands and Hoodies.

He eavesdrops on their
empty remarks.

Woman: (hushed) That green is revolting! *I* would've used Miami
Teal.

Man: Fifteen hundred bucks for flowers! Room's full of con
artists.

He carries on
until an Old Dreiberg
approaches him,
parting a group to
come face-to-face.

Old Dreiberg: Ah! Young man, we meet again.

Īhāia: (buzzed) Huh? (slow recognition) Oh yeah, yeah, the bird
watcher. How's that going?

Old Dreiberg: The hunt continues. I found your piece...
challenging.

Īhāia: Good. Most people have told me it's "interesting".

Old Dreiberg: I recognised the image, it's hard not to forget it.
Do you know what happened that day?

Īhāia: I was born that day.

A small smile creeps
into Old Dreiberg.

Old Dreiberg: I heard a story of how that photograph was taken.

DISSOLVE TO:

EXT. WELLINGTON, ROOFTOP (THROUGH PHOTO CAMERA) - MORNING (1987)

OVERCAST SKY
sours with greys
and sullied whites.

Across the street is
the eastern side of
the BRITISH HIGH
COMMISSION.
To its LEFT,
and after an ALLEY,
is a large
CONCRETE CUBE.

It's quiet except for
the breeze.

Photographer's Voice: (O.S) You think something will happen today?

Male's Voice: (O.S) I think we should've seen this coming. First,
they sink the tree huggers, now this.

Photographer's Voice: (O.S) No big loss, eh?

They both laugh.

Male's Voice: (O.S) I wish they'd hurry up or piss off.

Suddenly,
BLACK FIGURES
flood out of the
CONCRETE CUBE--

Photographer's Voice: (O.S) Hey, hey, hey, look!

Male's Voice: (O.S) Who the fuck are they?

An efficient TEAM.
Three lay LADDERS
across the alley.
A MASKED SOLDIER
crosses the ladder
bridge--

Click.

The screen freezes,
capturing the moment.
The sound of
EXPLOSIONS,
SCREAMS of terror,
and thunderous
GUNFIRE.

END FLASHBACK

QUICK DISSOLVE TO:

INT. SARGEANT GALLERY - DUSK (PRESENT, FRIDAY)

ĪHĀIA'S ARTWORK is
finally revealed - the
image of a MASKED
SOLIDER ATOP THE
LADDER BRIDGE,
only now
reinterpreted as a
POINTILLISM COLLAGE.

Īhāia's buzz is
wearing off as he
looks at Old Dreiberg.

Īhāia: You took that photo?

Old Dreiberg: No, but I was nearby. It's not a day I'll forget.
(beat) Congratulations for tonight.

Old Dreiberg departs
and disappears into
the crowds.

Woman's Voice: (O.S) Mr Bennett, can I trouble you?

Īhāia turns
to see ELLIE,
exuding
sophistication.

Ellie: Will you show me your piece?

She leads him,
weaving around
clusters of wine
drinkers
to his COLLAGE at
the END WALL.

Īhāia: Did we meet--

Ellie: (hushed) You don't know me. (loud) What is this style
called? It's very... interesting.

He eyes her,
very confused
but refocuses on her
question.

Īhāia: It's pointillism. Each square is a civilian's private
moment in public. Together they form one image of watching.

Ellie: "Civilians?" Civilians don't say that.

Ihāia: They also don't usually point that out. You military?

She leans in--
something in the
COLLAGE
catches her eye.

Ellie: She looks familiar.

He doesn't need to
look to know.

INSERT: "AFTER SMOOTH OPERATORS" COLLAGE

ONE OF THE IMAGES - a
WOMAN'S FACE fills the
screen,
a familiar face
a familiar image,
it was taken in this
gallery,
she had looked right
into the camera:
ELLIE.
More and more
MONOCHROMATIC IMAGES
can be seen
until the whole piece
comes into view:
masked ĀNARU atop
ladder bridge.

Ellie: (Cont'd, O.S) Don't you feel bad taking these photos,
spying on people?

END INSERT

Īhāia looks at Ellie,
annoyed but serious.

Īhāia: I think we're natural watchers.

Ellie: And if I felt like suing?

Īhāia: Here? Good luck.

She smiles,
a genuine one but it
turns practiced.
She looks around,
as if scanning
the room.

Īhāia: (Cont'd) Looking for someone?

She turns back to the
collage and points to
it.

Ellie: Don't look, in fact look (to the unseen collage) here.
(hushed) There are men in this room who don't belong, men who are
watching us.

Īhāia: (laughs) What?

As if reflex
he moves to look--
She puts a hand on his
shoulder,
refocuses him

Īhāia: (Cont'd) Who?

Ellie: People you don't want to leave here with.

Īhāia: You're French, right? I know how much you love wine--

Ellie: (strong) Listen. (beat) Stay calm. Remain until the end and slip out with the crowd.

Īhāia: Why?

Ellie: I'll guide you to me.

Īhāia: Why?

A beat.

He looks to her--
She's gone.

He looks around...

... No sign of her.

He does notice MEN,
HARD MEN, the type
that follow orders,
littered around
at the corners,
watching
but not looking.
MEN that don't fit in.

Īhāia begins scanning
EVERYONE.
Is that MAN serving
drinks and looking at
him one of them?
Or that WOMAN touching
her ear, is that a
hearing aid or an
earpiece?

For the first time
tonight,
the room feels very
small
and overcrowded.

He moves swift,
almost uncontrollable
to the EXIT--

EXT. SARGEANT GALLERY/QUEENS PARK - CONTINUOUS

Before he descends the
six steps--

The sound of ringing.

INSERT: ĪHĀIA'S PHONE

18:15

NO CALLER ID

END INSERT

He answers it.

Ellie's Voice: (Phone) I told you to wait until the end.

He frantically looks
around...

... But there's no
one.

Īhāia: (panicked) Are you watching me?!

Ellie's Voice: (Phone) Stay calm. Come to me.

He looks around
again...

... But sees nothing,
until--
He catches sight of
HEADLIGHTS blinking ON
and OFF in the jam-
packed CARPARK between
the MUSEUM and
MEMORIAL HALL.

He sees and descends
the VETERANS STEPS.

He looks out...

... Nothing.

Looks behind...

... MEN exit the
GALLERY in a hurry
towards HIM--

He sprints down the
remaining steps,
frantically pursued to
the CARPARK.

He narrowly enters a
wimpy ELECTRIC CAR--

They drive away,
as the screen splits:

**(LEFT) INT. SARGEANT GALLERY -
SAME**

Old Dreiberg stands in
front of Ihāia's
COLLAGE,
next to Col. Lavigne.

Old Dreiberg: He's with her.

A beat.
He remains by her
side,
and not by choice.

Col. Lavigne: If you something
to say...

Old Dreiberg: Why are we
bothering with the boy?

Col. Lavigne: Because it'll
get results. Is the house
ready?

Old Dreiberg: You mean her
routine? Yes.

Col. Lavigne: Oversee it.
(beat) And cut the men loose.
They draw attention.

END SPLIT-SCREEN:

EXT. SAFEHOUSE - LATER (NIGHT)

ELLIE and IHĀIA pull
up to a FANCY HOUSE

**(RIGHT) INT/EXT. ELLIE'S CAR
(MOVING) - STREETS - MINUTES
LATER**

Ellie turns onto
HILL STREET.

They continue down the
eerie, empty streets.

She turns the VOLUME
DIAL...
*Gentle chords tumble
in,
followed by a slow
slurring woman's voice
from SpaceGhostPurrp's
"Diamonds Pt.2
Instrumental" (we hear
the lyrics:
"Ashamed / Be ashamed
/ Ashamed / Inside")*

Ellie glances at
Ihāia,
who keeps looking out
his window.

Reflected streetlights
pass overhead.

across the road from
VIRGINIA LAKE.
No lights on inside,
no sign of life.

Īhāia: What's this?

Ellie pushes on
to FRONT DOOR,
unlocks it...

... Hand on door,
she looks at him,
expectantly.

Ellie: Do you prefer under the bridge?

INT. SAFEHOUSE - CONTINUOUS

They step inside and
it looks cold,
and by Īhāia's shiver,
it is cold.

Ellie: It's not much, but there aren't any leaks.

INT. SAFEHOUSE - BEDROOM - CONTINUOUS

She looks around,
he does too.
On the wall, behind
the bed,
is a LARGE MIRROR--

INSERT: WALL MIRROR

They can be seen in
the reflection

Ihāia: I want some answers.

Ellie: How about a game? I'll ask, and for every satisfying answer, I'll unwrap your prize. (beat) Sit on the bed.

He sits down on the
bed,
exhausted.
She stands in
front of him,
just out of his reach.

Ellie: (Cont'd) Do you know who I am, have we ever met before today?

He looks confused,
not in the mood for
games.

Ihāia: I don't think so.

She peels off her
JACKET,
and lets it fall to
the floor.
That catches his
attention.

Ellie: Did you recognise the old man that approached you tonight?

Ihāia: I met him today... in the library.

She unbuttons her SILK
SHIRT,
tosses it off,
revealing her LACE
BRA.

Ellie: And what did you talk about?

Īhāia: Birds.

She slips out of her
PANTS,
they pool at her
HEELS,
revealing her matching
UNDERWEAR.

Ellie: Last one. Do you want to leave?

Īhāia: No.

She climbs on top of
him.

She takes off his
glasses,
tosses them onto a
BEDSIDE TABLE.

A beat.

They kiss
passionately.

LATER:

Naked, on the bed,
Īhāia on top
he takes her face in
his hands
she looks in his eyes.

LATER:

They hold each other.

END INSERT

She brushes
a comma of his hair
curling down to closed
eyes.

Ellie: Do you trust me?

Īhāia: (tired) What's your name?

Ellie: Ellie. My name is Ellie.

He opens his eyes,
looks into hers.

Īhāia: Mine's Īhāia.

Ellie: I know. (beat) Can you tell me where it is, the tape?

He snuggles closer
into her.

Īhāia: It's in my apartment, in the ceiling above my desk.

She holds him,
a practiced move
but her sigh shows how
thankful she is.

On the wall
behind them,
above the bed,
the LARGE MIRROR--

SECRET ROOM:

THREE MEN are packed
into this BROOM CLOSET
squished together with
SOUND-DAMPENING FOAM
coating the walls.
Through the large ONE-
WAY MIRROR,
they're watching Ellie
and Īhāia in bed.

Two Men are seated,
one mans a FILM
CAMERA, the other has
HEADPHONES on,
the third (OLD
DREIBERG) merely
watches.

Ellie's Voice: (softly, through Headphones) I'll keep you safe.

Īhāia's Voice: (through Headphones) How?

BEDROOM:

Ellie snakes a hand
underneath the PILLOW,
pulls something unseen
out--

She swiftly sticks it
to his neck,
a TASER,
stunning him before he
can react.

He goes stiff for a
moment
and drops unconscious
onto the bed.

She untangles from
him,
wraps herself
in the blanket
and exits the room.

FADE OUT.

FADE IN:

INT. LINTON, BENNETT HOME - LOUNGE - DAY (FLASHBACK, 1987)

A MAN is passed out on
the couch.
He looks awfully like
Īhāia,
a spitting image,
but he can't be,
not with that slight
mullet
and shadow beard,
or his strong
physique.
This is the father at
his peak.
This is a young
Corporal ĀNARU
"FLINCH" BENNETT (30,
Māori).

A onesie-wearing
INFANT lays on his
chest,

gently rising and
 falling in sync with
 his sleeping father.
 This is the new-born
 ĪHĀIA (0).

A WOMAN dozes on an
 armchair nearby.
 This is HERA "SARA"
 BENNETT (29, Māori).

Everyone is beat but
 enjoying the quiet and
 a much-deserved
 rest...

Ring!

Hera startles awake--
 so does Ānaru--
 Īhāia stirs.

Hera quickly answers
 the *ringing* PHONE--

Hera: Hello. (beat, to Ānaru) Ānaru.

He hands the baby to
 her.
 She moves down the
 hallway.

Ānaru: Yeah. (beat) Now?

EXT. PALMERSTON NORTH, VICTORIA ESPLANADE - LATER (DAY)

An IRON BENCH rests
 beside flower beds

off the palm tree
road.
A middle-aged MAN sits
on the bench,
reading a NEWSPAPER.
This is Colonel CAINE
(mid 40s, Pākehā).

INSERT: CAINE'S NEWSPAPER

The New Zealand Herald
Wednesday - April 1,
1987

"SMOOTH OPERATORS"
(large IMAGE of MASKED
SOLDIER atop ladder
bridge)

"SAS save hostages
spare no terrorists"

*The sound of
approaching footsteps,
crunching grass--*

END INSERT

Caine flicks
paper down,
looks up--
Ānaru sits beside him.

Ānaru: What's up, Boss? You could've come to the house.

Caine passes the
paper.

Col. Caine: Have you seen this, Flinch? You're famous.

Ānaru: (takes paper; beat) Isn't this bad for us?

Col. Caine: The mission was a success. No casualties.

Ānaru places paper on
in between them,
on the bench.

INSERT: NEWSPAPER ON BENCH

Wind licks the pages,
rustles the leaves in
waves.

Ānaru: (O.S) What's the problem, then?

Col. Caine: (O.S) I was looking at your leave. You're back in two days.

Ānaru: (O.S) Yeah. (beat) So what?

The page corners flick
up as if caught on the
wind's tail.
The *wind howls* in an
attempt to shake the
overstayers off.

Col. Caine: (O.S) We can move Sara and the kid up, house near the base - save you traveling back and forth.

Ānaru: (O.S) She ain't gonna move again, and not up there.

Col. Caine: (O.S) What are you expected to do, transfer out? Slide back down to infantry? Please.

The *wind* picks up
speed,

almost violent.

A beat.

The paper relents,
falls back to bench.

Ānaru: (O.S) You didn't come all this way for that.

END INSERT

Ānaru eyes Caine,
curious.

Female's Voice: (Pre-lap) Thank you for coming, Corporal Bennett--

INT. LINTON BASE, OFFICE COMPLEX - CONFERENCE ROOM - CONTINUOUS

Beige walls with beige
floor,
blinds are drawn,
fluorescent bulbs buzz
overhead,
and pulse a
sickly white.

A large oval TABLE
fills the room.
All but FOUR CHAIRS
are empty.
Around the middle,
Ānaru sits across from
the WOMAN.
This is a young Major
LAVIGNE (mid-30s,
English)

At the end of the
table,
Col. Caine's seated
beside a MAN.
This is a young
DREIBERG (39,
English).
He and Ānaru share a
look of recognition,
like they've met
before.

Maj. Lavigne: (Cont'd) I understand you're on leave.

Her voice is familiar,
like we've heard it
before.

Ānaru: No worries, ma'am. (beat) I do have a question.

Maj. Lavigne: Shoot.

Ānaru: Couldn't this have waited 'til I was back on duty? My son was just born.

Maj. Lavigne: Born the same day as the siege, am I right? (nods) That was a very good day for you. (beat) Now, we've been running a little exercise to test mental "snappiness," shall we say. I'm going to give you a word and I want you to respond with the first thing you think of. Understood?

Ānaru: I thought this was a debriefing, ma'am.

Maj. Lavigne: We already know what happened, Corporal. (beat) Now I may say "war", and you may say--

Ānaru: Fear.

Maj. Lavigne: (smiles) That's it. (beat, recomposes) Accept.

Ānaru: Accepted.

Maj. Lavigne: Bleed.

Ānaru: Blood.

Maj. Lavigne: Reliable.

Ānaru: Me.

Maj. Lavigne: Current.

Ānaru: Affair.

Maj. Lavigne: Love.

Ānaru: Wife.

Maj. Lavigne: Product.

Ānaru: Gun.

Maj. Lavigne: Bomb.

Ānaru: Boom.

Maj. Lavigne: Ballad.

Ānaru: Blues.

As soon it's out, he
knows something's off.

Caine glances at
Dreiberg
who stares at Ānaru.

Maj. Lavigne: Yes, well, all seems to be in order. Thank you, Corporal Bennett. You may leave.

There's an awkward
feeling but Colonel
and Corporal move out,
leaving the two Brits
to it.

Maj. Lavigne: (Cont'd) Well, you're out of excuses.

Dreiberg: Ma'am, I--

Maj. Lavigne: Shut up.

A chill creeps in...

And now her voice is
recognised - it was
the same voice heard
on the "BALLAD" TAPE.

Maj. Lavigne: (Cont'd) You lost it. You find it. Or pray it's never found.

EXT. PALMERSTON NORTH - VICTORIA ESPLANADE - LATER (DAY)

Caine's back on the
IRON BENCH,
Ānaru paces in front
of him.

Ānaru: What the fuck was that?

Col. Caine: Calm down. I was told they were there to debrief you.

Ānaru: I ain't calming down! Boss, what'd you walk me into?!

Ānaru stops pacing.

A beat.

Caine gives him a
dangerous look.

Ānaru: (Cont'd) A debrief would be internal. What do they have to do with us?

Col. Caine: You've never seen them before? (beat) Ever?

A beat.

Ānaru: No.

A beat.

Col. Caine: Those pommy pricks are Army but they're not us. (beat) They're probably sore they couldn't use their own boys for the embassy.

Ānaru looks away,
shrugs.

Col. Caine: (Cont'd) Forget them. If you had done something, we'd know. Go home and enjoy your last days. You're back into it come Monday. All right?

Caine stands up,
pats Ānaru on the
shoulder.

FADE OUT.

OVER BLACK:

Young Īhāia's Voice: Dad.

Ānaru's Voice: Yeah?

Young Īhāia's Voice: What if we don't find one?

*The sound of crunching,
like walking through
leaves and wet
grass...*

FADE IN:

EXT. RANGIATA, BUSH/HILLS - NIGHT (FLASHBACK, 1997)

A FATHER and SON
trek through wet
grass and shrubs.

YOUNG ĪHĀIA (10) holds
the SPOTLIGHT while
ĀNARU (now 40) has a
RIFLE slung over his
shoulder.

Salt sprinkles his
pepper-black hair,
now no longer a mullet
but high and tight.

Ānaru: You wanna turn back?

They keep walking in
silence.

Young Īhāia: Dad.

Ānaru: Yeah?

Young Īhāia: Do you wish you were still SAS?

Ānaru: No.

Young Īhāia: I heard Mum say it. It sounded like you were fighting.

A beat.

Ānaru: I'm 40, Hai; too old, now.

They continue
trekking.

DISSOLVE TO:

EXT. BUSH/SPOTLIGHTED TREEBRANCH (THROUGH RIFLE BARREL) - LATER

The whirling metallic
grooves of the BARREL
lead to a spotlighted,
bug-eyed POSSUM,
frozen on the branch.

Ānaru: (O.S) Just breathe. Slow. In, out. You're gonna pull the trigger, not snap it, and exhale. Okay?

Young Īhāia: (O.S) Okay.

Ānaru: (O.S) Line the sights up with its head. Breathe. And pull.

Young Īhāia: (O.S) Okay.

A long beat.

The barrel starts
wobbling.

Ānaru: (O.S) Hai, when you're ready.

A long beat.

Ānaru: (Cont'd, O.S) Hai.

Young Īhāia: (O.S) I can do it.

The barrel SHAKES,
as if being taken by
someone taller,
before recentering on
the frozen possum.

A beat.

Inhale...
steady
Exha--
Gunshot cracks the
air--
POSSUM drops off the
branch,
thumps to the ground.

BACK TO SCENE:

Ānaru,
holding the RIFLE,
sees Īhāia looking
away at the ground.

Ānaru: If you couldn't do it, you couldn't do it.

Īhāia nods,
but is unconvinced.

Young Īhāia: I just didn't want you to get angry.

Ānaru: Hai. (sighs) You need to harden up and do things for yourself, not to impress me or your mother or anyone else.

Īhāia nods,
understanding.

Īhāia: Can I try again?

END FLASHBACK

FADE OUT.

OVER BLACK:

*The sound of PASSING
TRAFFIC tumbles into
a pool of CHILDREN'S
LAUGHTER,
pleasant "GOOD
MORNINGS",
repetition of PADDLING
WATER,
and DOGS PANTING,
mushing together
messily
until a blast of a
RIVERBOAT'S HORN
ploughs through--*

SMASH IN:

EXT. RIVER BOARDWALK - LATE MORNING (PRESENT, SATURDAY)

ĪHĀIA is lying on
damp grass.
He looks like a wreck.

But something's not
right,
besides waking up in
the middle of town.

ĪHĀIA'S POV - BOARDWALK:

The world is blurry.
We can make out people
looking at us,
Pointing,
whispering.

Why won't his eyes
focus?
Where are his--

BACK TO SCENE:

Glasses aren't on.
He feels around,
they probably fell
off,
except his hands only
get wet
and narrowly avoid dog
shit.

ĪHĀIA'S POV - ROADSIDE:

We get off the ground.
Everything's a blur.
Only what we hear is
clear.
Passing cars,
children laughing,
dogs barking.

ĪHĀIA'S POV - VARIOUS STREETS:

We cross the road onto
TAUPO QUAY.

Sticking close to the
buildings,
we make our way up the
street.

We look behind us
but see nothing but
blurs.

QUICK DISSOLVE TO:

We stumble up DREWS
AVE and trip on a
raised piece of
pavement.

We look down and
around.

We squint and the
focus gets better but
not enough to see
clearly.

QUICK DISSOLVE TO:

We grab the railing
outside the STORMWATER
SEPARATION building on
the corner of RIDGEWAY
ST and DREWS AVE.

We lean against the
railing,
huffing and puffing--

We bolt it to the
nearby AGAPANTHUS
BUSHES and SPEW.

We *groan* and spit the
remainder out,
before crossing road
and continuing up the
hill.

QUICK DISSOLVE TO:

On WATT STREET, we see
a BLUR speed past us--
*The sound of
screeching tires.*
The BLUR reverses into
view.
We keep trudging along
the footpath--

Female Voice: (O.S) There you are!

We're suddenly
supported by this
unseen woman and led
toward the PASSENGER
DOOR.

We're placed onto the
passenger seat.
We look and the
woman's face:

ELLIE.

She looks relieved but
also tense,
as if she's glad she
found us.

What for?
We don't know.

She quickly enters the
driver's side.

BACK TO SCENE:

INT/EXT. ELLIE'S CAR (MOVING) - STREETS - CONTINUOUS

Īhāia looks like he's
going to throw up
again.

Īhāia: Let me out!

Ellie: What?

Īhāia: Pull over!

She does as he
demands.

EXT. STREETS - CONTINUOUS

Īhāia quickly steps
out and hunches over,
retching but nothing
comes out.

She gets out as well.

Ellie: Are you okay?

He straightens up,
looks ropeable.

Ihāia: How did I get here?! Last night, I remember... (starts pacing) We were in bed... (beat) And then you started asking questions again. You asked-- (stops pacing) You asked me where I hid it. The tape. (beat) But I don't think I ever told you about it.

Ellie: And you lied. Get in.

He doesn't move.

Ellie: (Cont'd, strong) Get. In. (sweet) Please.

He does,
reluctantly.
They drive away.

INT/EXT. ELLIE'S CAR (MOVING) - STREETS - CONTINUOUS

She looks at him--
He's simmering.

Ellie: You'll be ready to serve if you keep stewing.

He ignores her.

Ellie: (Cont'd) Don't act so wounded, you haven't got the face for it. (beat) You think you're alone in getting screwed?

She goes unanswered.

Ellie: (Cont'd) You felt something last night.

Ihāia: The only thing you felt was made of flesh.

Ellie: Would you like an apology? (no reply, beat) Your picture shocked my bosses.

Ihāia: What?

Ellie: Because you look so much like your father.

He looks at her
dead serious.

Ellie: (Cont'd) I don't want him, just the tape he stole.

Îhãia: "Stole?"

Ellie: How do you think it came into his possession, of all people, in all places?

A beat.

She gives him his
GLASSES.
He puts them on.

Ellie: (Cont'd) Turn your phone off. Non-negotiable.

He does as she
demands.

In the distance,
on the RIVER,
a PADDLEBOAT can be
seen--

INT/EXT. ELLIE'S CAR (STATIONARY) - MARIA PL - MINUTES LATER

Ellie parks the car
next to the BRICK and
IRON GATE leading to
COOKS GARDENS.

Îhãia: I don't run.

Ellie: Wait here, then.

Īhāia: Why?

Ellie: Just trust me. Okay?

A beat.

He nods.

She reaches behind,
grabs a cream-coloured
JACKET,
and exits.

He watches her move
through the OPEN GATE.

He opens the CENTRE
CONSOLE...

... Empty.

He checks the
BACKSEAT...

... Nothing.

He opens the GLOVE
BOX...

... Finds a DIGITAL
CAMERA.

He looks up and sees
Ellie walk along the
path that snakes
around the running
track.

He takes the CAMERA
and exits--

EXT. COOKS GARDENS - CONTINUOUS

He keeps his distance
as he follows along
the path.

Athletes train on the
field to the LEFT.

She cuts up the stairs
to the TOP TRACK.

He follows,
catching glimpses of
her COAT
as she descends the
winding path to--

EXT. ST HILL ST - CONTINUOUS

He stands on the art
deco steps as
she continues down the
street.

He follows as she
comes to--

EXT. ROYAL OPERA HOUSE - CONTINUOUS

He looks around and
quickly enters--

INT. ROYAL OPERA HOUSE - CONTINUOUS

He sees her walk into
the MAIN HALL.

He instead goes
upstairs,
as the screen splits:

(LEFT) AUDITORIUM - CONTINUOUS

She moves down the rows of RED SEATS, sitting down next to Col. Lavigne.

Col. Lavigne: Where is it?

Ellie: He'll give it to me.

Lavigne looks at her.

Col. Lavigne: Lean harder on him. It should be easy for you.

Ellie: With all due respect, ma'am, I don't think that will work.

Col. Lavigne: Continue.

Ellie: If you wanted it in an instant, you could've used his father - that's the obvious play.

Col. Lavigne: Or you're being too soft on him. Indulging his fantasies. Leading him on.

A beat.

Col. Lavigne: (Cont'd) I saw the film, Bell. You're supposed to fuck him, not make love. It complicates things.

(RIGHT) UPPER FLOOR - SAME

He sprints up the flights of stairs, cautious as he reaches the top... No one is seen, so he edges to the BALCONY.

(RIGHT) AUDITORIUM (THROUGH CAMERA)

We see ELLIE sitting next to an OLDER WOMAN.

We zoom in...

Click.

The screen freezes as we take a picture.

We zoom in...

...and get a clearer picture of the Older Woman--

Click.

We hear footsteps-- coming up the stairs.

BACK TO SCENE:

Īhāia looks back and sees a MAN'S SHADOW moving up on the staircase wall--

He quickly moves to

(Cont'd)

the other staircase,
checks to see no one's
coming up it, and
waits...

OLD DREIBERG comes to
the top and scans the
area--

Īhāia quickly TAKES A
PICTURE of him while
hiding behind the
wall.

Old Dreiberg descends
back down the stairs.

Ellie: Forgive me if I wanted
some *pleasure* from this one.

He quickly returns to
the balcony--

Col. Lavigne: Good. Then you
won't object to this.

**(RIGHT) AUDITORIUM (THROUGH
CAMERA)**

Col. Lavigne takes a
SMALL WOODEN BOX from
the seat next to her
and hands it to Ellie.
She takes a peek--
and freezes.

And sees a SMALL
WOODEN BOX being
handed to Ellie.
We don't see what's
inside.

Col. Lavigne: There's nothing
to say.

Ellie gets up and
almost stumbles on the
way out--
Col. Lavigne remains
seated as Dreiberg

We quickly take
another picture of the
box before Ellie
leaves--

BACK TO SCENE:

(Cont'd)

takes Ellie's vacant
seat.
Ellie slowly walks
through the Foyer to--

**(LEFT) EXT. OPERA HOUSE -
CONTINUOUS**

She stands on the
footpath,
watches cars go past.

She slides the BOX
into her COAT POCKET.

She starts walking
along--

(LEFT) ST HILL ST - CONTINUOUS

Her progress is slow,
as if she's got all
the time in the world
or trying to delay
something.

She keeps looking
around,

Īhāia sprints to the
STAIRS, quickly
descends them but
stops halfway as--
Ellie slowly walks
through the FOYER to--

**(RIGHT) OPERA HOUSE/ST HILL ST
- SAME**

He stops in the
doorway as Ellie
stands still on the
footpath.
He can't run the
entire length of the
street before she sees
him, so he sneaks
around to the side of
the Opera House
and sees a path from
the bushes and small
hill to the top of
Cooks Gardens.

He takes a deep breath
and sprints,
jumping a cinderblock
retaining wall to the
thick shrubs and
trees, huffing and
puffing when he gets
to--

**(RIGHT) COOKS GARDENS -
CONTINUOUS**

(Cont'd)
 looking back at the
 Opera House,
 feels as if someone's
 watching her.

She comes to the art
 deco steps, glides up
 the cloud-shaped
 concrete walls to--

**(LEFT) COOKS GARDEN -
 CONTINUOUS**

She walks up the
 winding path,
 coming to the top
 track.

She goes down the
 steps to path by the
 FIELD.

She continues looking
 around, missing Īhāia
 running through the
 GATE ahead...

... but still finds no
 one watching her.

She walks through the
 OPEN GATE and
 approaches the CAR--

END SPLIT-SCREEN:

INT/EXT. ELLIE'S CAR (STATIONARY) - MARIA PL - CONTINUOUS

He guns it along the
 wire fenced path,
 tries to glimpse the
 cream-coloured TRENCH
 COAT. He spots it just
 as he reaches the top
 of the winding path
 Ellie is about to
 take.

He runs, puffing,
 down the steps to the
 path next to the
 ATHLETICS FIELD,
 slowing until he has
 to take a break and
 catch his breath.

He gets going again,
 now a stone's throw
 from the CAR.

He passes through the
 OPEN GATE,
 rushing to re-enter
 the--

**(RIGHT) ELLIE'S CAR
 (STATIONARY) - CONTINUOUS**

He's puffing, he's
 sweating - he wipes
 his forehead and tries
 to calm down--

INT/EXT. ELLIE'S CAR (STATIONARY) - MARIA PL - CONTINUOUS

Ellie enters,
unaware of Īhāia's
fluster.
She peels off her COAT
and tosses it onto the
BACKSEAT.

He looks away from
her,
tense.

Ellie: We need to get something.

EXT. NEW WORLD - LATER (EARLY AFTERNOON)

Ellie and Īhāia exit
her parked car.
He looks very
confused.
She smiles,
delighted.

INT. NEW WORLD - CONTINUOUS

This is all one,
unbroken movement.

They pass through the
AUTOMATED DOORS and
sign (it reads: NO
HOODS ON).

She holds his hand,
he shakes it off.

She takes it again and
forces a smile.

Ellie: (through gritted teeth) We're in love.

Īhāia: (laughs) Bullshit.

Ellie: Your hand's all sweaty.

Īhāia: I've been through a *lot* today. But in that case.

He interlocks their
fingers.

Īhāia: (Cont'd, smug) I'm not letting go.

She picks up a BASKET,
he takes it with his
free hand.

Īhāia: (Cont'd) We're doing your groceries?

Ellie: It's easier to talk in here, but feel free to get what you
like.

They pass the LOTTO
COUNTER.

Ellie pulls them
towards the nearby
FLOWER STAND.

She picks a bunch of
LILIES and puts them
in the basket.

They slowly move up
and down the aisles,
passing people and

their blocking
trolleys.

Ellie: What do you know about the ANZUS Treaty?

He shrugs.

Ellie: (Cont'd) It was created in '51 as a safeguard against
communism in the South Pacific.

Īhāia: How did that work out?

Ellie: Your country was ditched in '86.

Īhāia: When we went nuclear-free?

They wait for two
NANNIES to finish
their chat and unblock
the aisle.

A beat.

Ellie grabs a jar of
NUTELLA off the shelf.

They keep moving.

Ellie: There's rumours a new pact is being made, only this one
will ignore New Zealand for the UK.

Īhāia: But it's just a rumour...?

Ellie: My bosses never act on talk, so it must be real.

Īhāia: Is that a bad thing, this new treaty?

Ellie: It gets--

They round the
corner--
and almost walk into a
trolley with a TODDLER
trying to grab all the
LOLLIES off the
shelves.
They go around.

Ellie: (Cont'd) It gets lonely out in the cold.

Ellie reaches for a
box of "9 Grain"
CRACKERS--

Īhāia: Ah, ah, ah, only the water crackers.

Ellie: Why?

Īhāia: 'Cause they're better.

She grabs the box he
wants and puts it in
the basket.

Īhāia: What's all this got to do with me? You should take this up
with the government.

Ellie: Be sensible. Obviously, it's the tape.

Īhāia: It's just a cassette tape.

Ellie: This "rumour" put my bosses into a frenzy. They wouldn't
tell me what was on it, only that it was labelled "BALLAD".
They've been looking for months.

He stops,

so does she.

Īhāia: Your bosses. You mean--

He pulls the DIGITAL
CAMERA from his
pocket.
He scrolls through the
photos.

Īhāia: (Cont'd) Them?

She looks hurt.

Ellie: You followed me?

Īhāia: I didn't lie when I said I met the old man, but who are
they?

They start moving
again.
He retracts the
camera.

Ellie: That's Dreiberg. The other is Colonel Lavigne. I know they
were running the Pacific in the 80s. Have you heard about the
embassy siege in '87?

He nods
as they come to the
FROZEN SECTION,
passing the cabinets
of ice cream.

Ellie: (Cont'd) Oh, of course. Well, Dreiberg was one of the
hostages. I think that's where they were stationed.

Īhāia: My dad told me the terrorists were French. You're French. They're English. Why are you helping them?

They stop in front of
the frozen meals.

Ellie: Why do you take photos of people without their knowledge?

Īhāia: I have my talents. You?

Ellie: I pick the wrong hotels. (beat) Please, where is it?

They keep moving,
rounding another
corner,
down another aisle.

They stop by SHELVES
OF JARS. He picks one
off the shelf,
begins lightly tossing
it up and catching it,
like a tic.

Ellie: (Cont'd) Have you heard what's on it?

He keeps tossing and
catching the jar.
She snatches it from
him--

Ellie: (Cont'd) This is baby food.

--and places it back
on the shelf.

Ellie: (Cont'd) I need it. (beat) I'll... do anything you want.

He looks up and down
the aisle,
people pass it but for
now,
they're alone.

He shows her the
camera again,
with another photo.

Īhāia: What's in the box? Am I gonna wake up on the boardwalk
again? Am I even gonna wake up?

She looks away,
not in pain but like
there's an itch she
can't scratch.

Ellie: I've never killed anyone.

Īhāia: Then what?

She looks back at him,
now with a different
kind of itch.

Ellie: *You keep prolonging this.* It's reckless. And dangerous.
What happens if they target your father? Can you live with
yourself if something happens--

Īhāia: Alright, alright.

He pulls them towards
SELF-CHECKOUT--
But stops at a
NEWSPAPER STAND.
He takes one and reads
the headline.

INSERT: NEWSPAPER

Whanganui Chronicle
Saturday - 24 April,
2021

"PEEPING TOMS"
(large IMAGE of the
GALLERY EXHIBITION)

"When Smut
Becomes Art"

END INSERT

Ellie: Where is it, Īhāia?

He shows her the
newspaper,
and taps the IMAGE, as
to say, "It's here."

She instantly
recognises it.
That takes her by
surprise.

He puts the newspaper
back.
They keep walking...

... and enter SELF-
CHECKOUT.

Ellie: (Cont'd) We'll go tomorrow morning.

Īhāia: But tomorrow is--

Ellie: (interrupts) Yes, yes. (scans items) You pay.

He begrudgingly
obliges.

FADE OUT.

*The sound of a BUGLE
butts in--*

FADE IN:

EXT. WHANGANUI, QUEENS PARK - CENOTAPH - DAWN (2000)

STREETLIGHTS cut
through the dark blue
sky.
Puffs of cold breath
as people huddle
together,
bundled up in scarfs,
beanies,
and thick coats.

SOLDIERS stand rigid
in their crisp DRESS
UNIFORMS, lining the
central monument.

Young Īhāia (now 13)
stands in between Hera
& SERGEANT Ānaru (both
mid 40s).

MEDALS rest above
Ānaru's left breast
pocket.

WREATHS are laid.
Salutes.

21 GUNSHOTS.

A soldier slowly lays
another wreath,
stands at attention,
salutes,
and turns.

His uniform is
different,
more embellished,
higher in rank--
This is MAJOR GENERAL
CAINE (now 58).

Ānaru is caught off
guard seeing him.
Hera nudges him,
surprised as well.
Caine nods to them,
returns to his spot.

DISSOLVE TO:

EXT. 5 BATTALION BASE - LATER (MORNING)

Hera and Young Īhāia
approach the entrance.
To the FIELD in the
middle of the
compound,
Ānaru and Caine walk
across it to the row
of Unimogs and
obsolete Land Rovers.

Young Īhāia: Mum, who is that?

Hera: He was Dad's C.O. in SAS. What do you want for breakfast?

INT. 5 BATTALION - CONTINUOUS

Hera and Young Īhāia
walk through
the FOYER towards
the MESS HALL--

Young Īhāia: I need to go toilet.

She nods.
He breaks right,
looks back and sees
Hera rounding the
corner, out of sight.

He walks past the door
(labelled "MENS"),
exiting through the
nearby open door.

EXT. 5 BATTALION - CONTINUOUS

Young Īhāia runs
through the
COURTYARD/SMOKO AREA,
rounding the corner to
the FIELD.

He edges along the
road path leading to
the CONCRETE STORAGE
SHED halfway,
and hides up against
it.
He looks back,
around,
for anyone...

... but sees no one.

He watches Ānaru and
Caine enter one of the
middle Land Rovers--

Young Īhāia moves
towards the nearest
end of vehicles - the
mammoth UNIMOGS.
Passing one,
and another,
then creeping past
Land Rovers,
stopping at the rear
of the Rover next to
Caine's & Ānaru's.

Young Īhāia sees SMOKE
rising out of the
DRIVER'S SIDE...

... and then the
PASSENGER'S WINDOW
rolls down.
Smoke floats out.

He can hear the voices
from inside the
vehicle.

Maj Gen. Caine's Voice: Come back, then.

Ānaru's Voice: At my age?

Maj Gen. Caine's Voice: Not out there, of course. As an
instructor. No action.

Ānaru's Voice: It's been, what, ten years? I won't know any of those guys.

Maj Gen. Caine's Voice: They know you.

A beat.

Ānaru's Voice: For me, the action was the reason.

Young Īhāia sees,
through the REAR
PASSENGER WINDOW,
his FATHER looks to
the GENERAL--
and catches a glimpse
of Īhāia--

The boy ducks back
behind the Land Rover,
hoping he wasn't
caught.

Maj Gen. Caine's Voice: That's because you're a man of action!
You're wasting away here, so either stay and kill yourself, or
come back and live to the fullest.

Young Īhāia sees the
passenger door open--
He backs away,
and hides in between
the vehicles.

He watches CAINE cross
the FIELD towards the
CARPARK.
He looks over and sees
smoke continue to

stream out of the
truck.
He backs away.

*The (O.S) sound of a
BUGLE slices through--*

END FLASHBACK

EXT. QUEEN'S PARK - DAWN (PRESENT, SUNDAY)

STREETLIGHTS cut
through the dark blue
sky.
Puffs of cold breath
as people huddle
together, bundled up
in scarfs, beanies,
and thick coats.

One of those bundled-
up civilians is MEL.
She stands at the base
of the small hill
leading to the
CENOTAPH.

A MAN, his face is
unseen,
weaves through the
crowd,
stopping next to her.
She turns,
seeing it's ĪHĀIA.

Mel: Īhāia! (hushed) Why are you sneaking up on me? Hey, your Dad
came by the gallery yesterday; he looked at your piece--

Īhāia: He did?

He looks surprised,
genuinely.
It throws him off
balance,
off the reason he
approached Mel.

Ihāia: (Cont'd) Uh... Look, Mel, can I borrow your key to the gallery?

She hesitates.

Mel: What's going on?

Ihāia: I'll tell you. Promise.

She fishes the KEY out
of her pocket...

... hesitantly hands
it to him--
He snatches it,
before she could
change her mind.

Mel: This either sounds juicy or real shady, Hai.

Ihāia: It's a bit of both.

He weaves in and out
of the crowd.
ELLIE,
with her familiar
PEARL EARRINGS,
slips in next to him
as they move towards
the GALLERY.

At the TOP OF THE
VETERANS STEPS,
parallel to the
GALLERY,
OLD ĀNARU can be
glimpsed.
He's not focused on
the ceremony.

Suddenly,
Ellie sees a CLUSTER
OF MEN,
definitely not locals,
blocking their path.
Īhāia sees them too.
She looks around,
spotting BLUE UNIFORMS
by the cenotaph
and scattered around
them.

Ellie: Slip around. I'll join you inside.

He nods
and separates,
sticking close to the
COPS as he moves
through the crowd.

Ellie: (O.S) Oh my God! Gun! He's got a gun!

The (O.S) sounds of
GUNSHOTS--
SCREAMS--
People duck and
scatter in a frenzy--

Īhāia turns-- sees
Ellie struggling with
a MAN--
The armed MAN forces
her off him,
holding a PISTOL--
The COPS surround
them.

Īhāia almost runs to
Ellie--
but realises it's a
distraction.
He hurries over to--

EXT. SARGEANT GALLERY - CONTINUOUS

Īhāia quickly UNLOCKS
the door,
opens it,
and enters,
unaware Old Ānaru
has spotted him.

INT. SARGEANT GALLERY - CONTINUOUS

Īhāia creeps into the
quiet, dim space.
Dead ahead,
the COLLAGE hangs
on the END WALL.
He moves to it,
not bothering to check
if he's alone.

He lifts the collage
off,
slips THE TAPE

out from the back of
the CANVAS.
He smiles,
seeing the tape's
title (it reads:
"BALLAD")

He rehangs the collage
and moves towards the
exit,
passing through the
archway and coming to
the middle of the--

The LIGHTS snap on--

MEN and OLD DREIBERG
reveal themselves,
having hidden in the
WINGS.
Very theatrical.

One of the MEN blocks
the EXIT.
Old Dreiberg
approaches Ìhāia.

Old Dreiberg: You're quite good at this, young man, but I'm not
chasing. Hand it over and we can all go home.

Ìhāia: What have you got on Ellie?

Old Dreiberg: You want her? Give me the tape and you won't get her
in pieces.

Old Dreiberg holds out
his hand.
Ìhāia hesitates--

*The sound of a SIREN
blares,
the FIRE ALARM--
The MAN blocking the
EXIT grunts as he's
smashed on the back of
the head--
He drops to the floor,
revealing OLD ĀNARU,
holding a FIRE
EXTINGUISHER.
He lets it go,
it clonks to the
floor.*

A beat.

Time slows to a crawl
as Īhāia desperately
sprints towards his
Dad and the exit,
only it looks like
he's running
underwater,
a sluggish effort.
He's closely followed
by the MEN.

EXT. SARGEANT GALLERY - CONTINUOUS

Old Ānaru pulls Īhāia
out before they close
the DOOR and LOCK it.

Time returns to normal
as the DOOR *thumps*,
as if BODIES collide
with it.

People are still
fleeing the area
while some
curiously watch POLICE
CARS drive away.
The DAWN PARADE is
prematurely finished.

Old Ānaru tries
leading them down the
VETERANS STEPS--
Īhāia pulls him RIGHT,
towards the ALEXANDER
LIBRARY and a HOLDEN
parked outside it.
Ānaru's car.
They enter it and
drive away--

INT/EXT. ELLIE'S CAR (MOVING) - STREETS - CONTINUOUS

Old Ānaru sees THE
TAPE.

Old Ānaru: Where'd you get that? Did you go through my things?!

Īhāia: Dad, I'm trying not to crash here.

Old Ānaru: Fuck that. Not only have you got (points to tape) that
fucking thing, but I have to see *myself* in the paper because you
couldn't tell me yourself!

Īhāia: Oh, so *now* you care about my photos.

Old Ānaru: Your photo?

Īhāia focuses on the
road and trying not to
crash while constantly
looking in the
REARVIEW MIRROR.

They remain in
silence,
thick with simmering
tension.

INT. POLICE STATION - INTERVIEW ROOM - LATER (MORNING)

ELLIE,
handcuffed,
sits at a round table,
surrounded by grey
walls and not much
else.

The DOOR opens
and in walks Old
Dreiberg.
He sits down across
from her.

A long beat.
Awkward silence.
He stares at her.

Ellie: You're just looking at me.

Old Dreiberg: Obviously.

Ellie: No talk?

Old Dreiberg: (shrugs) Nothing to say.

Ellie: S'pose I won't be leaving this time.

Old Dreiberg: This country doesn't have a good history with French spies.

Ellie: You're comfortable saying that in front of all these ears?

Old Dreiberg: There's only us. (beat) Why did you do it?

Ellie: You weren't helping me. There is no leaving. (beat) Right?

A beat.

He takes out a KEY and
UNLOCKS her cuffs.

EXT. SAFEHOUSE - LATE MORNING

Old Dreiberg and Ellie
exit his GERMAN SEDAN.
The familiar FANCY
HOUSE across from
VIRGINIA LAKE stands
in front of them.

She approaches the
FRONT DOOR,
unaware of what's
going to happen.

INT. SAFEHOUSE - CONTINUOUS

Ellie and Dreiberg
enter,
flanked by MEN.
They see Col. Lavigne
on a sofa with a CUP
in her hands.

Col. Lavigne: I received word the Bennetts are--

Ellie: Ma'am, I--

Col. Lavigne swiftly
puts the cup down--
She leans back into
the sofa.

Col. Lavigne: (to Dreiberg) The Bennetts are home, up the road,
right now. Our friend contacted.

Old Dreiberg: We should skip the subtle tactics.

Col. Lavigne: And exposure ourselves further by having commandos
crawl along a civilian's front lawn?

Old Dreiberg: Some sort of action, then.

Col. Lavigne looks to
Ellie,
sees her PEARL
EARRINGS.

Col. Lavigne: I've always loved those earrings, Bell. May I see
one?

Ellie,
confused,
takes one out and
hands it to the older
woman.
Col. Lavigne inspects
it.

Col. Lavigne: Did you know they're created to shield against parasites entering the shell? And yet, our only use for them is purely aesthetic. (to Dreiberg) How soundproof is that closet?

A beat.

Old Dreiberg: Completely.

Col. Lavigne: Bring me the other earring.

In an instant,
the MEN drag a
struggling Ellie
towards the SECRET
ROOM--
Dreiberg picks up a
FRUIT KNIFE from the
KITCHEN--
Ellie's (O.S) muffled
screams go quiet as
the (O.S) DOOR slams.

SMASH OUT.

OVER BLACK:

SUPER:

PART 3 - THE SOLDIER

FADE IN:

INT. WELLINGTON, 15 GUILDFORD TCE - BOARD ROOM - MORNING (1987)

*Wonky synths of Erkki
Kurenniemi's "Dance of
the Anthropoids" limp
in, as--*

A MAN IN BLACK waltzes
into bustling space.
Beige walls.
Washed out floors.
Smoke pools at the
ceiling from all
the cigarettes.

Man in Black moves
through,
natural - he's meant
to be here.
Only bits and pieces
of him can be seen:
Combat boots,
gloves,
gas mask hanging from
belt,
submachine gun slung
across chest - his
"black kit".

Sans black mask
and grey hood
reveals slight mullet
and shadow beard.
Cruel eyes and
powerful physique.
It's a young ANARU
BENNETT (30),
part of the SAS
"Special Projects
Team".

Boards on one wall
display PHOTOS,
NAMES of HOSTAGES,
and X-RAYS (enemies).

Another wall -
ARCHITECTURAL PLANS
for separate FLOORS.
Cardboard mock-ups
show windows
doors,
every entrance, even
the adjacent
concrete cube.

Another wall - series
of AUDIO EQUIPMENT
men with headphones,
listening.

*A chorus of noise:
jagged rumbling
outside,
low droning
overhead...*

Ānaru carefully looks
out a nearby window--

ĀNARU'S POV - STREET/SKY:

GAS COMPANY
*jackhammers the road,
its rapid rhythm
pounds the ears.*

Above,
a 747 *shakes the
building's walls,*
flying far lower
than usual on
purpose.

These noises are
shields
distractions.

BACK TO SCENE:

He joins the mass of
"Operators" at the end
of the room - 32 in
total.
Addressing them is
COLONEL CAINE (mid
40s).

Col. Caine: ... Now, we've named this little excursion "Merce", as
in, "to punish, to penalise," and in this case, with no restraint.
(beat, for impact) Understood?

Tense atmosphere.
The words sink in.

Caine spots Ānaru
through the crowd,
moves towards him.

Col. Caine: You ready, Flinch?

All he gets is a nod.

Col. Caine: (Cont'd) You can sit this one out.

Now a head shake.

Col. Caine: (Cont'd) Oi. Look at me.

But Ānaru already is.

Col. Caine: (Cont'd) You wanna be wheeled in while your wife's down the hall? (shakes head) She'll put me in the bed right next to you.

Ānaru: I'm going. She knows that.

A beat.

Col. Caine: I'll get you there on time. We'll finish this first.

Another nod.

Caine returns to
planning boards,
already knows them by
heart.

Ānaru steels
himself for what
lays ahead.
Inhale...
steady.

*The limping synths of
"Dance" returns
us to--*

EXT/INT. 15 GUILDFORD TCE/CONCRETE CUBE BUILDING - MINUTES LATER

BLACK FIGURES
scuttle suffocating
brick streets.
Boots,
gloves,
gas masks,
no visible skin.

Nothing human.

THREE carry ladders,
their weapons hang
across their chests.

Everyone enters a
brutalist
CONCRETE CUBE.

Silent.
Quick.
Efficient.
Trained killers.
This is the SAS.

ANARU holds
at the top of
the stairs.
Hand on door,
waits for the
order.

Inhale...
steady
Exhale...
sinister.

Col. Caine's Voice: (Earpiece) Standby. Standby.

Inhale...
steady
Exhale...
sinister.

An excruciating beat.
Can almost feel
the electric air.

Col. Caine's Voice: (Earpiece) Go! Go! Go!

Door's ripped open
The OPERATORS emerge
onto--

EXT. CONCRETE CUBE BUILDING - ROOFTOP - CONTINUOUS

Ladders bridge alley
gap.

INTERCUT:

EXT. WELLINGTON, ROOFTOP - CONTINUOUS

Safe distance away,
a PHOTOGRAPHER
and ANOTHER MAN
watch the chaos
unfold.
Photographer *snaps the*
familiar photograph of
MASKED ĀNARU MID-WAY
ACROSS LADDER BRIDGE,
gun in hand,
in total control--

EXT. CONCRETE CUBE BUILDING - ROOFTOP - CONTINUOUS

The following
Operators dart across
after Ānaru.

EXT/INT. BRITISH HIGH COMMISSION - VARIOUS - CONTINUOUS

THE ROOFTOP:

HALF of the Operators
stack up on the
ROOFTOP DOOR.
Other HALF prepares
explosives on SKYLIGHT
WINDOWS,
and ROPE RAPPELLING
POINTS.

Additional OPERATORS
can be seen on the
STREET BELOW,
swarming through an
opened GATE, as they
proceed to--

FIRST FLOOR - REAR WINDOWS :

Two Operators position
SHAPE CHARGES - wooden
framed explosives - to
the reinforced
windows.
Rest of Operators
provide cover.

A beat.

Everyone's set and
move to safety.
Operators tap
shoulders of those
with DETONATORS.

A short beat.

The BUTTONS are hit--
Deafening

*but controlled
explosions--*

THE ROOFTOP: (SIMULTANEOUSLY)

Charges on the
skylight *BLOW*,
rocking the building
and street--

ROOF STAIRWELL/SECOND FLOOR:

Ānaru leads,
stacking up at
closed door.
Operators stack
behind him,
tap his shoulder.
Door's ripped open--

Ānaru: Flashbang!

DARK GREEN CYLINDER is
tossed through
open door...

A beat.

Burning light and
discombobulating noise
Operators swarm in--
Clearing corners,
repeating stack ups,
shoulder taps--
Entries.

Doors burst open--
Shouts

screams,
Controlled gunshots
X-Rays are eliminated
with quick precision.
Men and Women cower on
the floor,
hands raised: the
Hostages.

Ānaru: Down! Stay down! (beat) Clear!

Ānaru remains as the
rest of the Operators
move on.

A beat.

More gunshots ring
out.

He catches a glimpse,
through the furthest
doorway,
of one X-RAY
dragging a MALE
HOSTAGE away.
He quickly follows--

DEPARTMENT FOR INTERNATIONAL TRADE OFFICE:

The X-Ray throws the
Hostage onto the
floor,
in front of a
BOOKSHELF.
By his accent,
the X-Ray is FRENCH.

X-Ray: Open it. I want that tape!

The Hostage doesn't
move--

X-Ray slaps him
around,
throws him into the
bookshelf.

Hostage relents and
fingers the
underside of the
bookshelf.

A sharp *CLICK*--

Ānaru dashes into the
mundane room,
executes the X-Ray,
clear the corners,
and knocks out the
Hostage.

This unconscious man
is a young DREIBERG
(39).

A beat.

The bookcase
cracks open,
surprising Ānaru.
White fluorescent
lights bleed out
behind the crevice.
He slips behind
it to--

SECRET ROOM:

Maps, analytic
documents,
mind-map web
litters the
walls - a psycho's
wet dream.
Or a SPY's.

A beat.

On a bench
rests a lone
CASSETTE TAPE,
almost like a treasure
in ancient ruins.

Ānaru edges
forwards...
Notices maps of the
Commonwealth nations,
the languages spoken,
export commodities,
and current prices.

He edges closer to the
bench...

... and eyes the
tape's label (it
reads:

"BALLAD").

He reaches out--

A *sharp snap* in his
ear.

Col. Caine's Voice: (Earpiece) Flinch, where the fuck are you?!

Snaps his hand back,
as if scolded.

Ānaru: (into Radio) Eliminated X-Ray. Found last Hostage.

Col. Caine's Voice: (Earpiece) Welcome party's outside! Rendezvous
on first floor.

He looks at the
tape...

INT/EXT. 15 GUILDFORD TCE - ALLEYWAY - MINUTES LATER

The Operators lead the
freed Hostages
outside,
rallying with the last
SAS TEAM: the "welcome
party".
Hostages are
zip-tied
and kept on the
ground.
Names are fed
over radio
to be checked off
and cleared.

Hanging back,
Ānaru checks his
pocket,
pushing a
PLASTIC CASE
deeper in.
From the asphalt,
DREIBERG tries to
keep an eye on
the lone Operator.

Hostages are safe.
X-Rays have been
pacified.
A job well done.

Col. Caine's Voice: (Earpiece) All hostages safe. Good job, boys.
First round's on me. Flinch, get your arse over here. Double time.

INT. PALMERSTON NORTH HOSPITAL - VARIOUS - COUPLE HOURS LATER

MATERNITY WARD:

A worried MAN sprints
down a sterile hallway
to private room--

BENNETT'S ROOM:

He almost skids to
a stop
trying to limit the
noise. This is ĀNARU
BENNETT (30, Māori).
WOMAN in the bed
a little BUNDLE in her
arms.
He approaches the
Woman - his WIFE. This
is HERA "SARA" BENNETT
(29, Māori).

Ānaru: I'm sorry, I just got here--

Without a word, she
motions him to her.

He closes the space...

And meets his SON.

Hera: (to Baby) Look. Look, Daddy's here. (to Ānaru) I want to call him "Īhāia".

He nods - no words
needed.
Leaning in
kisses them both,
but it lacks the
intensity he put into
the Embassy.

END FLASHBACK

EXT. VIRGINIA LAKE - LATE MORNING (PRESENT, SATURDAY)

Ānaru rests on a BENCH
near the lake.
Tosses BREAD to the
quacking ducks
and reads his
NEWSPAPER.

Turning the page--
He stops and sees a
familiar image--

INSERT: NEWSPAPER

Whanganui Chronicle
Saturday - 24 April,
2021

"PEEPING TOMS"
(large IMAGE of the
GALLERY EXHIBITION)

"When Smut
Becomes Art"

END INSERT

INT. SARGEANT GALLERY - LATER (MIDDAY)

Ānaru moves through
the space, uneasy.
There aren't as many
people as last night.

A WOMAN spots him
right away.
She can't believe it
actually.
It's MEL.
She rushes over to
him.

Mel: Uncle Ānaru!

She quickly hugs him.

Mel: (Cont'd) Īhāia finally told you?

Old Ānaru: I read it in the paper.

An awkward beat.

Mel: Do you wanna see it?

She leads him to the
END WALL.
The COLLAGE stares
back at him.

Mel: (Cont'd) We got a lot of good buzz last night, particularly
Hai's piece.

Ānaru looks at his
younger self puzzle
pieced together with
images of strangers.

He doesn't look proud
or pissed,
but a stormy conflict
of the two.

Mel looks away,
someone's waving to
her.

Mel: (Cont'd) Are you gonna be okay, Uncle?

He nods.
She walks away,
leaving him alone.
Probably for the best.

A beat.

Female's Voice: (O.S) An interesting piece, don't you agree?

An OLDER WOMAN walks
up to Old Ānaru:
Col. Lavigne.

He nods.

Col. Lavigne: (Cont'd) The time it must've taken to put it all
together, composing each individual image as well as imagining it
as a whole.

He nods again,
but her words have
affected him.

Col. Lavigne: (Cont'd) Can I trouble you, Mr Bennett?

He looks to her.

EXT. QUEENS PARK - VETERANS STEPS - MINTUES LATER

Ānaru and Col. Lavigne
sit on the steps.
The GALLERY can be
seen at the top of the
hill behind them.

Ānaru: Have we met before?

Col. Lavigne: "War. Accept. Bleed. Reliable. Current. Love.
Product. Bomb. Ballad."

A beat.
It sounds familiar to
him.

Ānaru: Major Lavigne. Linton, '87.

She smiles.

Col. Lavigne: It's Colonel now.

Ānaru: What do you want?

Col. Lavigne: Do you remember the man that was with me thirty
years ago?

A beat.
He tries to recall.

Ānaru: The constipated one? Yeah, I saved his life in the embassy.

Col. Lavigne: Regrettably. He seems to have taken a fancy to your son.

Ānaru: What?

Col. Lavigne: I'm not one to blame others but if you hadn't taken what was ours, none of us would be here right now.

Ānaru: You're obsolete, same as your tape.

Col. Lavigne: So are you.

Ānaru: Nah, I'm retired.

He gets up,
a struggle with his
bad back.
He takes one step at a
time...

... Towards the 'X'
BUILDING in the
distance.

INT. 'X' BUILDING - APARTMENT - SAME

Old Dreiberg walks
through the quiet
space.

He moves towards
Īhāia's DESK,
and spots the RIPPED
BOX OF PHOTOS.

He pilfers through the
charred remains,

seeing a BOY and
WOMAN,
through various stages
of his life - a SON
and his MOTHER...

... Very few feature
the FATHER:

Ānaru.

Dreiberg's attentive,
intrigued by images.

The sound of RINGING
interrupts--

EXT. 'X' BUILDING - SAME

Ānaru tries ringing
Īhāia's buzzer.

Ānaru: Come on, boy.

He keeps trying.

Across the street, MEN
watch from inside a
BLACK SUV.

INT/EXT. VAN (STATIONARY) - STREET - CONTINUOUS

Ānaru can be seen
walking away.
ONE of the HARD MEN
talks on the PHONE.

Hard Man #1: Should we get him?

Old Dreiberg's Voice: (Phone) Did I issue the order, soldier? Just make sure he leaves.

Dreiberg ends the
call.

Hard Man #3: Don't let him get to you. I heard the "War Office" want him gone.

Hard Man #1: So, why don't they?

Hard Man #2: He's been around, you know? Wouldn't want that severance package.

The Men sit in awkward
silence.

INT. LINTON, BENNETT HOME - KITCHEN - AFTERNOON (FLASHBACK, 1987)

INSERT: GLASS BOWL ON COUNTERTOP

GREEN JELLY CRYSTALS
are poured into a
GLASS BOWL.
A steaming JUG rests
next to it.
HERA'S HANDS can be
seen measuring a cup
of hot water,
pours it into bowl.
The crystals turn
gluggy.
She uses a SPOON to
stir the green liquid,
dissolving the
crystals.

*The sound of a (O.S)
door opening.*

Hera: (O.S) Love? That you?

Ānaru: (O.S) Yeah.

Hera: (O.S) Come here.

*She continues to stir,
snaking through the
green liquid.
Crystals dissipate.*

Hera: (Cont'd, O.S) That came for you.

*The sound of (O.S)
paper tearing,
unfolding.*

Ānaru: (O.S) This is dated today.

Hera: (O.S) So?

Ānaru: (O.S) Post doesn't work that fast.

Hera: (O.S) What's it about?

*The spoon is let go,
it clanks against the
bowl, ringing out.
Another cup of water
is poured in.*

Ānaru: (O.S) "Pending an enquiry into Corporal Bennett's conduct in Operation "REDACTED" on "REDACTED", nineteen eighty-seven, we hereby order Corporal Bennett to immediately return to Papakura

Military Camp for debriefing. Failure to comply will result in--"
What the fuck?!

*The sound of (O.S)
footsteps.
He (O.S) storms off
She (O.S) follows.
Their (O.S) steps make
little ripples in the
green liquid.*

Hera: (O.S) Don't walk away. What is this about?

Ānaru: (O.S) How should I know? I was just debriefed.

Hera: (O.S) With Caine? Call him. He'd know, wouldn't he?

*More (O.S) footsteps.
More ripples.*

Hera: (O.S, Cont'd) You're not leaving.

Ānaru: (O.S) What else can I do, Hera?

*The sound of (O.S)
DRAWERS opening,
forcibly closed--*

Hera: (O.S) This is bullshit. You should be able to call someone.

Ānaru: (O.S) They don't even say what I've done. The embassy went perfect; I did everything right!

Hera: (O.S) Lower your voice. Īhāia's sleeping.

END INSERT

INT. BENNETT HOME - HALLWAY - CONTINUOUS

Hera is following
close behind Ānaru,
who's carrying a
packed BAG.

Hera: (Cont'd) I begged you not to go. But, oh no, "It's my job."
And what'd your job do? You missed your own son's birth. *That's*
what it did.

He sharply turns to
her.

Ānaru: Uh fuck, again with that?! How many times are you gonna
hold that over me?

INT. BENNETT HOME - KITCHEN - CONTINUOUS

INSERT: GLASS BOWL ON COUNTERTOP

*(O.S) The sound of a
DOOR slamming!*

A big ripple in the
liquid...

*(O.S) The sound of a
baby's cries--*

... The green liquid
settles back down.

DISSOLVE TO:

EXT. 5 BATTALION BASE - MORNING (2000)

Hera and Young Īhāia
approach the entrance.

To the FIELD in the
middle of the
compound,
Ānaru (mid 40s) and
Caine (now 58) walk
across it to the row
of Unimogs and
obsolete Land Rovers,
a BOTTLE OF BEER in
their hands.

Maj Gen. Caine: Your son - he's a good-looking boy. Can I count on
him serving his country?

Ānaru: He doesn't have it in him. And I wanna keep it that way.

Maj Gen. Caine: Shame. If he's even a fraction like you, he'd make
a damn fine soldier.

Ānaru: Congratulations on the promotion. Chief of Army. Your days
must be busy, too busy to be here.

They approach and
enter one of the
middle VEHICLES--

INT/EXT. LAND ROVER (STATIONARY) - CONTINUOUS

They take swigs while
resting in the FOREST-
GREEN INTERIOR.

Maj Gen. Caine: It's a day of remembrance, Sergeant. Which reminds
me of your own promotion. You enjoying this place?

Ānaru shakes his head.
Caine pulls a CIGAR
out of his pocket,

hands it to Ānaru.

Maj Gen. Caine: (Cont'd) Enjoy this, then.

Ānaru takes it,
rolls down the window
as Caine lights it.

Ānaru: This place is killing me.

Caine rolls his window
down and
lights his own CIGAR.

Maj Gen. Caine: Come back, then.

Ānaru: At my age?

Maj Gen. Caine: Not out there, of course. As an instructor. No
action.

Ānaru: It's been, what, ten years? I won't know any of those guys.

Maj Gen. Caine: They know you.

A beat.

Ānaru: For me, the action was the reason.

Ānaru looks to Caine--
Spots ĪHĀIA - crouched
behind the NEXT
VEHICLE - through the
REAR PASSENGER WINDOW.
The Boy instantly
ducks out of sight.

Ānaru looks shocked at
being spied on,
but he brings himself
under control.

Maj Gen. Caine: That's because you're a man of action! You're
wasting away here, so either stay and kill yourself, or come back
and live to the fullest.

Caine opens the door--

Maj Gen. Caine: (Cont'd) I can see why you don't want to leave
this place.

--and exits.

Ānaru continues
smoking in silence,
unsure of what to do.

END FLASHBACK

INT. WHANGANUI, BENNETT HOME - LATE AFTERNOON (PRESENT, SUNDAY)

Īhāia opens the
DRIVER'S DOOR of
ELLIE'S CAR.
He rummages around,
looking for something.

Smoke trails into the
air as Old Ānaru
chugs on a cigar
while resting on the
FRONT STEPS.

Old Ānaru: That girl. She's with them.

Īhāia: They all know you, Dad. Are they why you left?

A beat.

Old Ānaru: No.

INT/EXT. BENNETT HOME/ELLIE'S CAR (STATIONARY) - CONTINUOUS

Īhāia finds Ellie's
small WOODEN BOX
from Lavigne
under the DRIVER'S
SEAT.

Old Ānaru: (Cont'd) No, I chose that.

The words affect
Īhāia.

Old Ānaru: (Cont'd) But it was because of me, not you and your
mother.

Īhāia opens the BOX--
It's lined with BLUE
FELT and holding
JUMPER CABLES.

A beat.

He tosses the box onto
the seat and exits--

EXT. BENNETT HOME - FRONT STEPS - CONTINUOUS

Īhāia approaches his
Dad,
serious.

Īhāia: How'd you get roped into this?

Old Ānaru: Why do you wanna know?

Īhāia: Because you brought them here.

Old Ānaru stares at
his son...

A beat.

... before faltering.
He looks away.

Īhāia: (Cont'd) Dad. How'd you get that tape?

Old Ānaru: I should've destroyed it. (beat) But I didn't. I
couldn't. Not when I knew what was on it.

Īhāia sits next to his
Dad on the steps.

Īhāia: You could've left it there.

Old Ānaru: Act like it never existed? Well, I guess it never did.
(beat) I'll take it to them.

Īhāia: What? No.

Old Ānaru: It's my fault this is happening.

Īhāia: And it's my fault they're still here. I've had
opportunities to give it up, but I didn't.

Old Ānaru: Why? They could've fucking killed you.

Īhāia stands up,
starts pacing.

He runs through
everything that's
happened.

Old Ānaru: (Cont'd) What?

Īhāia: I liked playing the part, alright? It was as exciting as it
was terrifying. But I was really good at.

Īhāia,
coming down from his
excitement,
recognises his
confession - that he
was playing a game of
life and death.

Suddenly,
a YELLOW VAN
pulls into the
driveway.
A MAN exits,
holding a MANILLA
ENVELOPE.
A COURIER.

Courier: I-higher Bennett?

Īhāia: Yeah.

The Courier hands
him the ENVELOPE
and leaves.

Īhāia opens it--
Drops it with a
fright--

a SEVERED EARLOBE and
PEARL EARRINGS falls
out and onto the
ground.

Old Ānaru: Jesus.

Old Ānaru picks them
up,
puts them back into
the envelope.

Old Ānaru: (Cont'd) I thought you said she's one of them?

The sound of RINGING
interrupts.

As Ānaru answers his
PHONE, the screen
splits:

**(LEFT) INT. SAFEHOUSE -
BATHROOM - SAME**

Dreiberg is washing
BLOOD off his hands.

Old Dreiberg: I knew it was
you. All those years ago, I
knew it was you.

Old Dreiberg: Well, you did
save my life.

Old Dreiberg: I guess there's
solace in the fact that you

**(RIGHT) EXT. BENNETT HOME -
FRONT YARD - CONTINUOUS**

Ānaru moves away from
Īhaia,
who's still looking at
the SEVERED EAR.

Old Ānaru: Why didn't you do
anything about it?

Old Ānaru: I'm sorry if I
caused you any hardship.

(Cont'd)

haven't had it easy either.

(beat) You got my parcel?

Old Ānaru: Straight from the
butcher.

Old Dreiberg: Bring the tape
to the lake at ten, or I'll
filet the other ear.

END SPLIT-SCREEN:

EXT. BENNETT HOME - FRONT YARD - CONTINUOUS

Īhāia eyes his Father,
curious by the
conversation but also
afraid of the MANILLA
ENVELOPE.

Īhāia: Dad--

Old Ānaru: We're not letting them fuck us over. Have you got a
camera?

INT. SAFEHOUSE - SECRET ROOM - SAME

Ellie and Col. Lavigne
are cramped inside.
Ellie is dazed,
shaking.
BLOOD covers the right
shoulder of her shirt
and hair.
Some is even on the
sound-proof WALLS.

INSERT: BLOODSTAINED FOAM WALL

The blood isn't a
spray pattern but
SMUDGES,
as if someone wiped
their hand on the
wall.

Col. Lavigne: (O.S) I'm sorry, Bell. I had to convince Dreiberg.

Ellie: (O.S) You cut off my ear!

Col. Lavigne: (O.S) You lost the lobe. Don't be dramatic.

Ellie: (O.S) Why did you give me that box? I don't hurt people.

Col. Lavigne: (O.S) It's just a tool, like your body. (beat) Do
you still want your debt cleared?

Ellie: (O.S) I'm not hoping for that anymore.

Col. Lavigne: (O.S) Acquire that tape and head towards the
walkway. I'm the only one who can give you what you want.

A beat.

BLONDE, BLOODSTAINED
HAIR covers the
smudges.

Ellie: (O.S) You must think I'm a fool. Desperate. And on my
knees.

Col. Lavigne: (O.S) No, I think you hope I'm telling the truth.

FADE OUT.

FADE IN:

EXT. VIRIGINA LAKE - CARPARK - NIGHT

Only TWO CARS are on
this dark,
wet patch of asphalt,
illuminated by a
single STREETLIGHT.

OLD ĀNARU stands off
from OLD DREIBERG and
ELLIE.
The latter's looking a
little docile,
as if she's drugged.
Old Dreiberg keeps her
close.

Old Dreiberg: I figured you'd come alone.

Old Ānaru: I want assurances that you two cunts - (to Ellie) not
you, (to Dreiberg) the other one - will leave my family alone.

Old Dreiberg: All I want is that piece of plastic.

Old Dreiberg nudges
Ellie forward.
She slowly walks over
to Ānaru,
her bloodstains are
now a dried,
dirty brown.

Across the road,
next to the SAFEHOUSE,
on the corner of GREAT
NORTH ROAD and PARKES
AVE--

EXT. VACANT LOT - SAME

ĪHĀIA crouches beside
a CONSTRUCTION
CONTAINER,
CAMERA in hand.

EXT. VIRGINIA LAKE - LAKE (THROUGH CAMERA) - CONTINUOUS

We zoom in,
as Ellie holds out her
hand to Ānaru.

Click.

The screen freezes as
we take a picture.

A beat.

Dreiberg pulls out a
PISTOL,
aims at Ānaru.
*The sound of a sharp
inhale.*

We quickly zoom in,
as Ellie says
something to Ānaru.

A beat.

Ānaru relents
and hands her THE
TAPE.

Click.

Suddenly,
the CAR WINDOW near
Dreiberg CRACKS--

EXT. VIRGINIA LAKE - CARPARK - CONTINUOUS

Dreiberg flinches--
A small hole appears
in the WINDOW with
cracks splintering off
it--

BRIGHT COLOURFUL
LIGHTS shine from the
lake's centrepiece:
HIGGENBOTTOM
FOUNTAIN--
The BOARDWALK is also
bathed in a pulsing
NEON RAINBOW--

TWO more SILENT BULLET
HOLES appear in the
CAR WINDOW,
shattering it
and the DRIVER'S SIDE
entirely--
Dreiberg rushes out of
the way,
behind the shrub fence
separating the
carpark from the
LAKE GROUNDS--

Ellie instantly
dashes,
towards
the BOARDWALK--

Ānaru,
having ducked beside
his own CAR,

sees Dreiberg run
towards the brick
orange ART DECO
building: The WINTER
GARDENS--

EXT. VACANT LOT - SAME

The piercing
synthesized wails of
Erkki Kurenniemi's
"Prelude" slide in,
as--
Ihāia sees his DAD
follow DREIBERG into
the BUILDING--
and ELLIE run to the
BOARDWALK.

He sprints after her,
across the road and
onto--

EXT. VIRGINIA LAKE - BOARDWALK - CONTINUOUS

Ellie nears a WOODEN
ARCHWAY in the middle
of the boardwalk,
held up by thick round
posts.
A couple of BENCHES
rest underneath the
wooden canopy.

She looks back,
hearing the *thump* of
approaching footsteps.

The pulsing lights
shower everything in
garish tones as
*icy digital scales and
slow arpeggios drone
with maddening
repetition.*

INTERCUT:

INT. VIRGINIA LAKE - WINTER GARDENS - SAME

Ānaru enters the dark
and crowded space
unarmed and blind to
his environment.
*The sound of running
water for small
concrete fishponds.
FLORA everywhere. It
is glasshouse after
all.*

The entrance STEPS
diverge into TWO PATHS
separated by a central
column of FLOWERS,
SHRUBS, and other
PLANTS.
Midway,
on the LEFT PATH
is a WISHING WELL.

The psychedelic lights
from outside seeps
through the CLEAR
CORRUGATED ROOF,

illuminating the space
but also camouflaging
it as well.

*The hypnotic synths
bounce around as*

Ānaru sees WET
SHOEPRINTS on the
concrete floor going
LEFT.

He looks down and sees
he leaves none.
He goes RIGHT.

INTERCUT:

EXT. VIRGINIA LAKE - BOARDWALK - CONTINUOUS

Īhaia,
puffing,
catches up with Ellie.

Ellie: What are you doing here?

Īhāia: Since I've met you, do you how much running I've done? Do
you know how little cardio I do?

She smiles,
genuinely.

He glimpses the dried
blood.

He tenderly parts her
blonde locks,
to reveal a BANDAGED
EAR.

Īhāia: (Cont'd) Jesus. Does it hurt?

Ellie: Lavigne gave me painkillers. They're pretty good.

Īhāia: I'm sorry. I-I should've told you where it was.

Ellie: And here I was thinking they'd hurt your father.

Īhāia: I'm sorry.

Ellie: You already said that.

The pulsing lights
reveal and hide
someone on the nearby
BENCH.

Female's Voice: Dearies.

They see COL. LAVIGNE
stand up and approach
them.
Only Īhāia is
surprised.
In Lavigne's hand is a
SUPPRESSED PISTOL.
It's smoking at the
end, having been
fired.
She keeps it lowered,
unthreatening.

Col. Lavigne: Gosh, you really do look like your father. (to
Ellie) Bell.

Lavigne slips her
weapon down the front
of her pants,
taking out a WALKMAN
from her coat pocket

as Ellie hands her the
TAPE.

Col. Lavigne: (Cont'd) You won't believe how hard it is to find
one of these bloody things that works.

Lavigne pulls the
HEADPHONES on and
presses "PLAY".

A beat.

She looks confused,
hits "STOP".

Col. Lavigne: (Cont'd) What is this?

INTERCUT:

EXT. VIRGINIA LAKE - WINTER GARDENS - SAME

Dreiberg creeps
through a pebbled
tunnel,
his weapon at the
ready.

The blend of pulsing
colours and *hypnotic*
music is enough to
drive you crazy.
"Prelude's" twinkling
synths ascend in
pitch,
higher and higher,
to an unbearable out-
of-rhythm piercing.

*The (O.S) sound of a
WOODEN BANG and a
SPLASH--
Dreiberg rushes back
down the tunnel,
coming to
the WISHING WELL.*

He sees the WOODEN LID
open,
and a puddle of water
at its base.
*All of "Prelude's"
electronics pick up in
pace,
becoming a chorus of
dial-up connections.*

Dreiberg scans the
area,
as *"Prelude's"*
*screeching might
produce tinnitus--*
He turns towards the
CENTRAL COLUMN of
FLORA--
A flash of BLINDING
LIGHT from Ānaru's
CAMERA--

Ānaru,
hiding amongst the
plants,
leaps out--
He smashes Dreiberg's
head on the WELL'S
RIM--

and forces him under
the water--
Dreiberg flails about,
tries blindly aiming
his weapon.
Ānaru wrenches the gun
underwater as Dreiberg
pulls the trigger--
Bullets shoot out,
carving through the
water before
impotently curving
down to a limp stop.

The lights above
rapidly shift through
vibrant REDS and
PURPLES to sickly
GREENS.

Dreiberg's thrashing
and bubbles cease
as his body goes limp.
*"Prelude" abruptly
cuts out, leaving a
deathly silence.*

INTERCUT:

EXT. VIRGINIA LAKE - BOARDWALK - CONTINUOUS

Lavigne looks at
Īhāia,
expectantly.

Col. Lavigne: (Cont'd) Well?

Īhāia: Is there something wrong with it?

She hands him the
headphones,
hits "PLAY" again.
*The sound of a deep,
droning VOICE,
unintelligible
with cracks and
distortion. It
stutters and skips
while a deep rolling
repeats underneath the
voice.
It sounds like it's
about to fall apart.*

She presses "STOP".
He takes the
headphones off.

Col. Lavigne: Did you tamper with it?

He looks her in the
eye,
keeps a straight,
serious face.

Ihāia: No.

Col. Lavigne: Then why is it like this?

Ihāia: It's been thirty years. (shrugs) It's worn out.

A beat.
Lavigne smiles,
a small but
impressed one.
She knows he's lying.

Col. Lavigne: I'm half tempted to offer you a job. (beat) But I think it's best we end it here.

She pockets the tape
player and is about to
leave--

Ellie: Ma'am.

Lavigne eyes Ellie.
A beat.

Col. Lavigne: You're on your own.

Īhāia: What about Dreiberg?

Col. Lavigne: Goodnight.

Lavigne walks down the
boardwalk,
leaving them.

Ellie can't believe
it,
she's finally free.

She starts walking
down the boardwalk...

... but stops and
looks back.

Ellie: You know, there's more than one gallery in the world. I'd keep that camera close.

She smiles at him,
a genuine one,

before continuing on.

A beat.

Īhāia watches her
leave...

... before instantly
remembering something.
He sprints back up the
boardwalk--

EXT. VIRGINIA LAKE - WINTER GARDENS - CONTINUOUS

Ānaru walks out,
a little stiff from
all the sudden
movements.

Īhāia runs up to him.
Doesn't know what to
do.

Ānaru nods to the CAR.
They walk in silence.
Nothing needs to be
said.

FADE OUT.

OVER BLACK:

SUPER:

FOUR MONTHS LATER

Radio Announcer's Voice: "And in international news: Britain, the
U.S., and Australia--"

FADE IN:

EXT. BENNETT HOME - BACKYARD - DAY

On a BENCH
nestled between OLIVE
TREES,
Old Ānaru and Īhāia,
a PORTABLE RADIO
in the middle.

Radio Announcer's Voice: (Cont'd) "--have launched a new defence
and security partnership with plans to--"

Īhāia flicks the
SWITCH--
The radio dies.

Ānaru looks over to
JANET'S HOUSE,
it's VACANT.

They remain seated in
silence,
but unlike before,
understanding of each
other.
A calm atmosphere
between them.

Ānaru pats Īhāia's
knee,
pulls CIGAR from
pocket and attempts to
light it--

Īhāia snatches it--
Offers an E-CIGAR,

apparently better
for you.

Ānaru looks sceptical,
prefers the real thing
but gives it a puff.
No lighter required.
Takes another puff
and another.

Īhāia pulls out his
own E-CIG.
They both "smoke" in
silence,
nothing more needs to
be said.

*Familiar off-kilter
synths of "DANCE OF
THE ANTHROPOIDS"
returns...*

DISSOLVE TO:

EXT. SARGEANT GALLERY - DAY

As we float up the
SIX STEPS
The wooden doors open
by themselves
We glide through--

INT. SARGEANT GALLERY - CONTINUOUS

Almost like a DREAM as
people move at a
snail's pace.

The molasses-like
crowd parts for us as
we drift under the
ARCHWAY to the END
WALL,
revealing for the
final time the
COLLAGE:

"AFTER SMOOTH
OPERATORS"

We continue until ONE
OF THE IMAGES - a
WOMAN'S FACE fills the
screen,
a familiar face
a familiar image,
it was taken in this
gallery,
she had looked right
at us:

ELLIE.

TITLE:

UNPRIVATE MOMENTS

CREDITS OVER FINAL IMAGE.

THE END.

H A Y T H A M;

OR,

The Māori Gothic.

Written by ANTHONY KOHERE

FIFTH DRAFT
June 23, 2022

OVER BLACK:

A WOMAN'S VOICE sings "Waiata a Hinewahirangi".
 A Ngāti Porou song about a mother being separated from her son.
 Her voice is full of sorrow and yearning.

FADE IN:

EXT. RANGIATA, THE MANOR - MORNING (1872)

It's a blistering summer's day.
 A great WHITE VILLA is surrounded by endless GREEN.
 Under the shade of a nearby TREE --
 A family of FIVE rests on a WHITE LINEN SHEET.
 The FATHER (28) --
 The MOTHER (27) --
 The BOY (9) --
 The GIRL (4) --
 And the GRANDMOTHER (51).
 The children struggle to remain seated --
 They take off, chasing one each other around the grounds.

Above the TREE, a KĀHU circles the family.

SUDDENLY --
 The MOTHER coughs.
 The FATHER pats her back, trying to soothe her.
 The BOY hands her a HANDKERCHIEF --
 The MOTHER accepts it and continues to cough.

Everyone is looking at her, concerned.
 She finally stops.
 Pulling the handkerchief away --
 BLOOD.

Above, the KĀHU flies away.

EXT. BEACH - LATE MORNING

There is a small ISLAND in the distance.
 Beyond the crashing waves.

The BOY and GIRL stand on the SHORE.
 He holds a long stick -- his left hand is bare and unblemished.
 She watches him carve and swoop with the stick...

... until it reveals letters in the dry, white sand.

GIRL, AGE 4

"A... B... C."

INT. THE MANOR, 2ND FLOOR - MASTER BEDROOM - AFTERNOON

The MOTHER is confined in a large FOUR POSTER BED.
She looks pale and weak.
At her side are the BOY and GIRL.
She tries to hold their hands.

GIRL, AGE 4 (V.O)

"D."

INT. THE MANOR, 2ND FLOOR - AFTERNOON

From outside the DOORWAY --
The BOY and GIRL watch as their FATHER --
Inside the MASTER BEDROOM --
Kneels next to the BED.
He buries his head onto the blankets.
The MOTHER is motionless.
The GRANDMOTHER lets out a silent, chilling wail.

GIRL, AGE 4 (CONT'D, V.O)

"E."

EXT. TE AUTE COLLEGE - MORNING

A CARRIAGE pulls up to an imposing red brick structure.
The building is surmounted by a tower.
Beneath the clock is the school's coat of arms, wrought with iron.
Four turrets rear themselves at each corner of the tower --
In the middle is a flagstaff.

FATHER and SON step out of the carriage.
The former looks gaunt, in the throes of grief.
The latter follows as his father pushes ahead.

They are met by the HEADMASTER (late 40s).
A gruff man with white hair and rigid posture.
He stiffly shakes the Father's hand.

GIRL, AGE 4 (CONT'D, V.O)

"F."

From inside the ENTRANCE --

A YOUNG WOMAN (18), in servant's dress, watches the Boy's arrival.

INT. TE AUTE COLLEGE - HALLWAY - MINUTES LATER

The BOY struggles to lug his SUITCASE down the long hallway.

He sets the case down and huffs --

It's picked up and carried away --

He sees a YOUNG WOMAN taking it to the end of the hallway.

She opens a DOOR and enters.

He chases after her.

INT. TE AUTE COLLEGE - BEDROOM - CONTINUOUS

He finds her lifting his case onto the SMALL BED.

She's wearing a black gown, white apron, and bonnet.

She smiles at him.

He smiles back, finally relaxed --

Like a coil being eased open.

He hesitates before approaching her.

GIRL, AGE 4 (CONT'D, V.O)

"G."

EXT. URUPA - EARLY MORNING (1878)

In this small fenced off area --

The BOY (now 15) --

The GIRL (now 10) --

And the GRANDMOTHER (57) --

Are surrounded by whanaunga.

A COFFIN is held over the open grave by ropes.

It is situated next to another GRAVE --

The HEADSTONE reads:

Kaikiri Hapere

1845 - 1872

"A soul so gentle, lest we forget."

The KĀHU swoops down and lands on the simple WHITE CROSS.

It reads:

Henare Hapere

1844 - 1878

The bird remains for a few moments...

... before taking off into the sky again.

The Girl begins crying.

The Boy holds the Girl's hand with his gloved left hand.

[*NOTE: All TE REO dialogue will be ENGLISH in brackets.]

BOY, AGE 15

(gently)

[I'll never leave you.]

The Girl stills -- ceases crying.

She leans against him as the COFFIN is lowered into the grave.

GIRL, AGE 4 (V.O)

"H."

The mournful WAIATA finally ends.

EXT. BEACH - LATE AFTERNOON

The BOY and GIRL stand on the SHORE like all those years ago.

His left hand is horribly scarred -- they look years old.

He holds a BLACK GLOVE.

Above them, a KĀHU circles them...

... he glares at it wishing he had his grandfather's rifle with him.

She holds his left hand and rubs it, soothing a persistent pain.

GIRL, AGE 10

"I..." love you.

He looks uncomfortable.

There's no lying in her eyes.

LONG FADE OUT & IN:

INT/EXT. CARRIAGE (MOVING) - COASTAL ROAD - AFTERNOON (PRESENT)

Inside this velvet-lined box is a MAN and WOMAN.

Both of fine dress.

But he has disregard for certain customs.
 He keeps his LEFT HAND covered with a GLOVE.
 He does not wear hats.
 A dark featured man with black hair and broad shoulders.
 Tall and strong with a sharp gaze from cruel eyes.
 By contrast, she's fresh from her sheltered world.
 A pretty, young thing wrapped up in a FUR CLOAK.
 With doe eyes, she looks out the window --
 The wheel is nearing the edge of the cliff.
 Her breathing quickens.
 She snatches his hand as if it's a life saver.
 This is HAYTHAM "HAEATA" HALBERT (25) and MEREANA HALBERT (19).

HAYTHAM

Can you swim?

MEREANA

Yes.

HAYTHAM

Good. If we survive tumbling off the side at
 least we won't drown.

MEREANA

That doesn't make me feel safer.

The carriage rounds the last corner of the cliff...

... coming to flat paddocks on the right of the dirt road --
 Sand dunes on the left.
 This is RANGIATA, 1888 --
 The most eastern point of land in the North Island.
 A place of isolation.

Haytham points to a small ISLAND off the coast.

HAYTHAM

There's Whangaokeno.

He then points to a big hill down the shoreline.

HAYTHAM (CONT'D)

And that's Otiki.

MEREANA

Is this your private world?

HAYTHAM

It's yours now.

The carriage enters a PADDOCK --

EXT. RANGIATA, FRONT PADDOCK - CONTINUOUS

It passes through an open IRON GATE and short STONE WALLS...

... headed for a white, two storey VICTORIAN VILLA.

It stands stark against the lush GREEN surrounding it.

INT/EXT. HAYTHAM'S CARRIAGE (MOVING) - FRONT PADDOCK - CONTINUOUS

Through the windows --

They see a KĀHU flying above the house.

MEREANA

[A hawk? That's a good sign.]

Haytham doesn't respond.

His contempt for the bird has not faded.

They near the grand house -- its state becomes clearer.

EXT. THE MANOR - CONTINUOUS

The CARRIAGE parks beside the nearby TREE.

The DRIVER unloads their luggage from the roof rack.

HAYTHAM climbs out and helps his wife.

MEREANA takes in the decaying house.

Despite its imposing grandeur, it's sick.

Barely holding together.

A section of ROOFING is caving-in above the front, upstairs room.

Paint is fraying, exposing the weatherboards.

The FRONT DOOR appears like the entrance of a mausoleum --

Its stained-glass panels break up the monotonous white.

Flower beds line the bottom of the PORCH --

Only, any flora there is dead and withered.

He eyes her as it sinks in.

HAYTHAM

Disappointed?

MEREANA

Not at all. It's... very impressive.

HAYTHAM

It's a piece of shit--

She's shocked by his crude words.

He notices her discomfort.

HAYTHAM (CONT'D)

Have I offended you?

MEREANA

I'm still adjusting to your tongue.

HAYTHAM

Say it.

MEREANA

Pardon me.

HAYTHAM

"Shit." Say it.

MEREANA

No.

HAYTHAM

Yes. Say it.

A battle commences within her head --

A lady would resist such vulgarity --

But a small part of her wants to indulge it.

Now, free from her parents.

Free from society.

From eavesdroppers.

MEREANA

(confidently)

Shit.

He smiles and claps for her.

HAYTHAM

Now it doesn't sound so foreign.

She's demure, even embarrassed by her actions.

HAYTHAM (CONT'D)

Back to this (points to house) monstrosity.
It's bound to crush us in our sleep.

She takes his hand -- gives it a reassuring squeeze.

MEREANA

It requires repairs, but that's doable... We
could have a house built in the city like my
father offered.

He turns them around, so the house is behind them.
They face nothing but open land and ocean.

HAYTHAM

And give this up?

MEREANA

I see.

HAYTHAM

And what is it you see?

She looks to him and smiles.

MEREANA

Our home.

He kisses her, she kisses back.

SUDDENLY --

The FRONT DOOR opens.

Out steps an OLD WOMAN.

She's leaning on a CARVED CANE as she hobbles down the STEPS...

... across the GRASS TENNIS COURT...

... to stop in front of them.

Despite her small stature, she appears robust.
 Even a little intimidating.
 More than a little.
 This is KŌKĀ (67).

HAYTHAM

[Nanny.]

KŌKĀ

[Haeata.]

(to Mereana)

[Who are you?]

HAYTHAM

[My wife.]

The older woman is shocked only for a moment.
 Mereana realises Kōkā didn't know.
 She steps forward.

MEREANA

Ko Hikurangi te maunga.
Ko Waiapu te awa.
Ko Ngāti Porou te iwi.
Ko Rewi Manuel rāua ko Umutahi
ōku matua.
Ko Mereana Hapere tōku ingoa.

MEREANA

[My mountain is Hikurangi.]
 [My river is Waiapu.]
 [My tribe is Ngāti Porou.]
 [My parents' names are David
 Manuel and Umutahi.]
 [My name is Mary Ann Halbert.]

KŌKĀ

(to Haytham)

[At least she's of equal standing.]

(to Mereana)

[Was it a joyous ceremony?]

MEREANA

[It was lovely.]

Kōkā nods stiffly before entering THE MANOR again.
 Haytham lets out a frustrated sigh.

MEREANA (CONT'D)

She has a right to be angry. We didn't
 invite her.

He gives her a look that says, "Don't start."

He walks away -- down the PADDOCK.
Not wanting to go inside, Mereana quickly follows him.

EXT. BEACH - MINUTES LATER

HAYTHAM & MEREANA stand on the SHORE, facing one another.

The waves crash --
Violent.
Rhythmic.
Wind howls incessantly.
A small island is nestled off in the distance.
Stormy skies and choppy waters --
Like *Caspar David Friedrich's "The Monk by the Sea"*.

HAYTHAM

Is this everything you imagined?

MEREANA

I wouldn't say that.

HAYTHAM

That bad?

MEREANA

It's not a matter of bad or good, merely...
unexpected. I've heard stories--

HAYTHAM

(interrupts)
What stories?

MEREANA

Of the manor. Of you. [Everyone said you're
mad, bad, and dangerous to know.]

HAYTHAM

You're still here.

MEREANA

I can't help it that I like you.

HAYTHAM

That's nice.

She looks away.
Hurt.
But not unexpected.

SUDDENLY --

The sound of a HORSE'S NEIGHING.
Haytham finds a BOY riding along the DUNES.
A barefoot boy, who's holding the ROPE REINS in his hands.
No saddle.
This is TURĪRĪ (9).

TURĪRĪ

[Uncle!]

The boy dismounts -- hitches the horse to nearby DRIFTWOOD.
He barrels right into Haytham --
Who lifts the boy up into his arms.

TURĪRĪ (CONT'D)

[Did you bring me anything?]

HAYTHAM

[What kind of greeting is that? Not even a simple, "Hello," for your uncle.] How go your lessons?

TURĪRĪ

I can read on my own now... I only need help with some words.

HAYTHAM

Well done.

He puts his nephew back down.
Turirī finally notices the young woman.

HAYTHAM

Turirī, this is Mereana. My wife.

TURĪRĪ

Wife? [Will you have a baby?]

HAYTHAM

[Soon. Say hello.]

The boy takes her hand --
Presses his lips just above her knuckles.

TURIRI

It's a pleasure to meet you, my Lady.

She's amused by the gesture.

MEREANA

Thank you, Turiri.

He lets go of her hand.

TURIRI

Uncle taught me to do that. He said that was
the first step to coit--

Haytham abruptly covers Turiri's mouth with his hand.
She's confused by the boy's final word.

HAYTHAM

[Enough of that. Go on home before it gets
dark.]

TURIRI

Can I stay for supper?

With a huff, Haytham leads them back towards THE MANOR.

DISSOLVE TO:

INT. THE MANOR, 1ST FLOOR - LATER (LATE AFTERNOON)

MEREANA walks down the HALLWAY.
She eyes FRAMED PHOTOGRAPHS of MEN and WOMEN hanging on both walls.
She stops in front of a PORTRAIT of a dark man --
Cloaked in a chiefly KOROWAI --
His HARD FACE is covered in tattooed lines and curves.

She moves on -- the next is of the CHIEF and his WIFE.
They're wearing ENGLISH CLOTHES.
The one after that has a YOUNG COUPLE, flanked by their relatives.
A wedding picture.

These walls of history lead from the STAINED-GLASS FRONT DOOR...

... to a CLOSED DOOR at the other end.

Midway, there is a junction.

A flight of stairs leads up to the 2ND FLOOR.

Across from the STAIRCASE is the LIVING ROOM.

She takes in its cosiness.

Dark wood panelling, leather sofas, and dark timber furniture.

Bookshelves line the entire right wall.

Broken in the middle by an OPEN FIRE.

The end wall is anchored by a central POU.

It meets at the top with diagonally adjoining beams.

Each is intricately carved -- embedded with language and PŪRĀKAU.

Lining the ceiling are TUKUTUKU PANELS.

A series of interweaving threads of black, red, and white.

An inviting space.

A rich space.

She continues on, towards the end of the HALLWAY.

EXT. THE MANOR - BACKYARD - SAME

HAYTHAM & TURĪRĪ sit on logs near a FIRE PIT.

Roasting skewered POTATOES, YAMS & KUMARA.

Haytham notices his nephew's sombreness.

HAYTHAM

[I know it's not much, but it'll fill you
up.]

TURĪRĪ

[I like vegetables.]

Haytham grunts in response -- not up for this.

The boy stiffens, feels his uncle's annoyance.

He takes a chance.

TURĪRĪ (CONT'D)

[I won't be allowed to come here for much
longer.]

HAYTHAM

[Why do you say that?]

TURĪRĪ

[When the baby comes, you won't have time
for me. I'll be in the way.]

Haytham twists the stick skewers -- more as a distraction.

HAYTHAM

[He'll need an older brother.]

TURĪRĪ

[So, it is a boy.]

HAYTHAM

[I didn't say that.]

The boy relaxes -- helps his uncle rotate the vegetables.

DISSOLVE TO:

INT. THE MANOR, 1ST FLOOR - KITCHEN - LATER (SUNSET)

KŌKĀ sits at a small OAK TABLE across from MEREANA --
Who is buttering slices of bread.

Red-oranges peel through the windows.
Creating an intimate backdrop.

KŌKĀ

[You speak well for city folk.]

MEREANA

[My mother raised me well.]

KŌKĀ

[Your mother comes from good blood.]

HAYTHAM enters through the BACK DOOR with TURĪRĪ --
Carrying a tray of baked vegetables.
He sets it down on the table.
They take their seats.

KŌKĀ

[We eat rich tonight! All that's missing is
a bird and some shellfish.]

HAYTHAM

[I saw that damn kāhu - maybe we'll serve
him tomorrow.]

KŌKĀ

[You'll not harm him.]

HAYTHAM

[Because it's a kaitiaki? What's it
protecting: us; this house; our land?]

A silence descends -- thick and unmistakable.

KŌKĀ

[Turīrī.]

They all close their eyes and bow their heads.
Haytham is the last to do so.

TURĪRĪ

*Nau mai e ngā hua
o te wao,
o te ngakina,
o te wai tai,
o te wai Māori.
Nā Tane
Nā Rongo
Nā Tangaroa
Nā Maru
Ko Ranginui e tū iho nei*

Ko Papatūānuku e takoto nei

*Tūturu o whiti ka whakamaua kia
tina!*

TURĪRĪ

[Welcome the gifts of food]
[from the sacred forests]
[from the cultivated gardens]
[from the sea]
[from the fresh waters]
[The food of Tane]
[of Rongo]
[of Tangaroa]
[of Maru]
[I acknowledge the sky father who
is above me,]
[the earth mother who lies
beneath me]
[Let this be my commitment to
all!]

CHORUS

Tina!

TURĪRĪ

Hāumi e! Hui e!

CHORUS

Tāiki e!

They all tuck in.
Mereana uses a knife and fork --
Turīrī & Kōkā use their hands --
Haytham switches between the two.

HAYTHAM
(to Mereana)
Enjoying your "feast"?

Mereana smiles with satisfaction at its simplicity.

Outside the windows --
Foul clouds cluster.
Swelling with a dark thickness.

HAYTHAM (CONT'D)
We'll have a proper one tomorrow.

TURĪRĪ
May I return for it?

HAYTHAM
We'll see.

A soft tapping on the roof is heard...

... it grows until it's a heavy rapping.
They look out the WINDOWS --
To see disruptive RAIN pouring down.
A deep rumble of THUNDER echoes.

HAYTHAM (CONT'D)
(to Turīrī)
[You're not going anywhere tonight.]

TURĪRĪ
[Yes!]

HAYTHAM
[Go put your horse in the barn. You can have
my old room.]

Turīrī pushes his chair out and is about to leave.

HAYTHAM (CONT'D)

[Only for the night.]

TURĪRĪ

[Yes, Uncle.]

He runs out of the room.

HAYTHAM

(to Mereana)

[Prepare his bed.]

Mereana nods -- takes the dishes to the sink.

Kōkā hobbles out of the room, leaning on her carved cane.

Haytham is looking out the WINDOW...

... preoccupied by something...

... a figure in black in the PADDOCK -- THE VEILED WOMAN.
The sight chills him, freezes him in place.

INT. THE MANOR, 2ND FLOOR - BOY'S BEDROOM - LATER (DUSK)

MEREANA smooths out the woollen blanket.

Fluffs the pillow at the head of the BED.

Finished, she looks around...

... it's just a bare room --

One devoid of any boyish charms or trinkets.

It's hard to see a child inhabiting it.

She sees a piece of PAPER poking out of a BOOK atop a DRAWER...

... crossing the room, she opens the book's cover --

And is bothered.

It reads: "*Manfred, a dramatic poem by Lord Byron*"

She pulls the loose PAPER out --

And is even more concerned.

It reads: "*Benjamin Franklin, Advice to a Friend on Choosing a Mistress*"

Its handwriting is amateurish like a child's.

She begins reading.

INT. THE MANOR, 2ND FLOOR - MINUTES LATER

MEREANA exits the bedroom, clutching the BOOK.
She leaves the DOOR open...

... and sees that every other DOOR is also open...

... except for ONE.
The front, upstairs room.

She moves towards it...

... grips the HANDLE --
And finds it LOCKED.
There is no wiggle.

She backs away, curious...

... and crosses to an OPEN DOOR.

DISSOLVE TO:

INT. THE MANOR, 2ND FLOOR - MASTER BEDROOM - NIGHT

The room appears untouched since his parents occupied it.
Large FOUR POSTER BED --
VANITY --
BEDSIDE DRAWERS and ARMOIRE --
It's all still here.

MEREANA fits in well.
Like it was made for her.
She's lying in the middle of the bed.
Her back against the headboard.
She's shed her heavier layers of dress for a NIGHTGOWN.
Loosened her hair.
In her hands is a LEATHER NOTEBOOK.
She's writing into it.

HAYTHAM stands in the doorway.
Admiring her.
Her obliviousness.

HAYTHAM
How goes the writing?

She startles before recognising him.

HAYTHAM (CONT'D)

If I find my portrayal untoward, we will
have words.

MEREANA

I never said it was about you.

HAYTHAM

You haven't said anything.

He smoothly moves to the vanity.
Takes a seat.
Looks at her in the reflection.

HAYTHAM (CONT'D)

I don't know what's more flattering:
Choosing me for your model or trying to
shield me from his character.

MEREANA

That will remain a mystery until it's ready.

HAYTHAM

But what if I was to visit a publisher? I
couldn't tell him it was incredible if I
hadn't seen it.

She suddenly feels lightheaded, gleeful.
Almost childlike with excitement.

MEREANA

You'll do that for me?

He unknots his TIE, slips it off.

HAYTHAM

If you're expecting before you finish...

She avoids his gaze.
Closes the BOOK.
Slides it onto her BEDSIDE DRAWER.

He glides back to close the DOOR.
Slips off his jacket.

Stops at the foot of the bed.
 She hasn't moved.
 He reaches out...

... his fingers graze over her feet --
 She flinches and giggles.
 He continues until he grips her ankles.
 He yanks her down --
 She yelps in surprise --
 Until she's underneath him.
 Hunched over her, their faces are nearly touching.
 Her breathing hitches.
 He waits.
 She evens out and reaches up --
 And kisses him, he kisses back.

QUICK FADE OUT & IN:

INT. THE MANOR, 1ST FLOOR - STUDY - LATE MORNING

HAYTHAM is seated at a large, heavy looking DESK.
 A simple WOODEN BOX rests atop the dark wood.
 He's slowly puffing on a cigar.
 The smoke steadily runs out the end.
 The burnt ash threatens to break off.

The rest of the space is sparingly decorated.
 Several items lie atop a CABINET --
 An ornate SWORD with a basket cage surrounding the hilt --
 A ceremonial adze, TOKI POUTANGATA --
 A pounamu blade lashed to a finely carved handle --
 And a large pounamu PATU.
 Aside from these, the real wealth lies through the WINDOWS --
 Unbroken views of land and ocean.

On the other side, standing, is a MAN.
 He is tall, dark, and handsome like Haytham.
 There is even some semblance between them.
 This is JAMES BRISTOW (25), whanaunga.

JAMES

[You come from a long line of greatness.
 Heroes worthy of love, adoration...
 remembrance. Your grandfather was a hero. He
 spared rebels. He protected his land and

people, but the people are restless. Your father passed before his time, and his duty passed to you as did his land. And through your mother, you inherited Rangiata and this castle.]

Haytham blows a big puff of smoke.
He sits the cigar onto an ornate BRASS ASHTRAY.

HAYTHAM

[You journeyed from Kawakawa to tell me this?]

JAMES

[It's called Te Araroa now. You've been away too long.]

HAYTHAM

[It's not the same without the people that made it.]

JAMES

[But they're always with us.]

HAYTHAM

[What do you want?]

James takes out a thick piece of folded paper from his pocket.
He opens and lies it atop the DESK --
It's a MAP.

JAMES

(points to various places)
[We're here. The eastern cape of the North Island--]

Haytham holds back his annoyance.
This isn't information, but a chance for James to hear himself.

JAMES (CONT'D)

(points to various places)
[From here onwards, aside from the Goldsmith's land, it's all yours... And down the coast is the mouth of the Waiapu River. This, also, is all yours.]

Haytham finds it amusing to hear, "all yours."

HAYTHAM

[It looks smaller on the map.]

James doesn't appreciate the flippant remark.
Drops the charm.

JAMES

[The land is sitting there. Untouched.
Unworked. Your estate is approaching ruin.]

HAYTHAM

[Ruin?]

JAMES

[You've been buying up surrounding parcels,
offering relatives enough to leave for the
city and never return.]

James shoves the map towards Haytham --
He doesn't even look at it.

HAYTHAM

[If they sell, then they didn't value the
land, therefore, they don't deserve to be
there.]

JAMES

[Offer me Rangitata. You won't do anything
with it.]

HAYTHAM

[Why would I do that?]

JAMES

[No one holds onto what they want for long.
You hold too much.]

Haytham doesn't respond.
Fury is beneath the surface.
He leans back in his chair...

... and looks out the SEASIDE WINDOW --

And sees something standing in the PADDOCK.
Facing him.

THE VEILED WOMAN.

She's gotten closer since her last appearance.

JAMES (CONT'D)

Haeata?

Haytham snaps his attention back to James.
He looks unsettled for a moment...

... before returning to his foul mood.

JAMES (CONT'D)

[Will you share?]

Haytham takes his cigar from the BRASS ASHTRAY --
Blows another puff of smoke.

James accepts that is a "No".
He leaves the map and storms out of the room.

Haytham looks back out of the SEASIDE WINDOW --
And sees nothing standing in the PADDOCK.

INT. THE MANOR, 1ST FLOOR - LIVING ROOM - SAME

MEREANA peruses the library BOOKSHELVES.
A leather NOTEBOOK in her hands.

TURĪRĪ is seated on one of the SOFAS.
Reading a BOOK.

MEREANA

What are you reading, Turīrī?

TURĪRĪ

"The Vampyre."

MEREANA

Oh, wonderful! Shelley is next, then.

TURĪRĪ

Uncle said Lord Ruthven is a hero.

MEREANA

"Hero?" He's the villain.

TURĪRĪ

That's what he said. Ruthven is Byron, and
Byron is his hero.

MEREANA

Did he teach you to read?

TURĪRĪ

He taught me himself. He won't let me go to
his school, though.

She turns to him.

He remains focused on his book.

MEREANA

What about your parents?

TURĪRĪ

[They do what he says.]

She moves down the bookshelves.

He sees the leather book in her hand.

TURĪRĪ (CONT'D)

[What are you reading?]

They finally look at each other.

MEREANA

I'm writing my own story.

TURĪRĪ

Really?

MEREANA

I'm sure it seems silly, surrounded by
(points to shelves) all of these.

TURĪRĪ

May I read it when it's finished.

She nods...

... before finding -- nestled at the back of an overcrowded shelf --
A FOLDING PHOTOGRAPH FRAME.

She opens it.

On the left is an ADOLESCENT GIRL.

On the right is a YOUNG MAN.

They are looking towards each other.

Separated by the bezels and hinges.

Together but apart.

TURĪRĪ

What did you find?

Mereana hides the PHOTOGRAPH behind her NOTEBOOK.

MEREANA

Nothing. I'm spoiled for choice... Turīrī,
would you like to help me outside?

He closes his book, intrigued.

TURĪRĪ

Help you with what?

She smoothly steps towards the OPEN DOOR.

MEREANA

I will meet you on the porch.

EXT. THE MANOR - MINUTES LATER

The SUN shines -- almost blindingly.

Across the PADDOCK...

KŌKĀ enters the URUPA at the foot of the hills to the north.

MEREANA & TURĪRĪ are kneeling in front of the flower beds --

Lining the bottom of the PORCH.

There's a pile of dead flora discarded behind them.

They're planting ROSE CUTTINGS in their place.

TURĪRĪ

What are these?

MEREANA

Roses from the city. Each one is a different colour.

TURĪRĪ

Why?

MEREANA

(amused)

Who knows?

In the distance --

A CART and HORSE enters the PADDOCK -- headed for THE MANOR.
Mereana catches sight of its approach.

MEREANA (CONT'D)

Who is that?

Turiri only glances for a split second before taking off --
Stopping by the GATE.
The CART gets closer...

... until they near the TREE --
The MAN at the reins pulls back on them.
He dismounts, hitches the horse to a nearby post.
He helps a WOMAN down.
They unload KETE from the cart.
This is ELIZABETH & POIHIPI PERETO (both early 30s).

Mereana moves to welcome them --
Along with HAYTHAM, from out of nowhere.

Haytham steps forward.
He embraces his cousins each with a hongī.

POIHIPI

[Haeata, we heard you had...]

ELIZABETH

[We came to welcome your wife.]

Haytham steps aside -- so they can all see Mereana.

HAYTHAM

[Mereana, these are Turiri's parents,
Elizabeth and Poihipi Pereto. Cousins, this
is Mereana, my wife.]

Elizabeth hands her tray to Haytham.
She warmly embraces the younger wahine.

MEREANA

[Thank you for the gifts.]

ELIZABETH

[We're family.]

POIHIPI

(to Haytham)

[I've been approached by James.]

HAYTHAM

[To be cheerful cousins once more?]

POIHIPI

[To buy our land.]

HAYTHAM

[What?!]

Haytham's harsh tone stops the two women from talking.
Poihipi leads him away from them --
Not far but out of earshot.

HAYTHAM

[You said--]

POIHIPI

(interrupts)

[Of course.]

HAYTHAM

[Damn snake.]

Poihipi looks at his cousin --
Thinking, "that's rich".

POIHIPI

[He said it's no different from what you're
doing, only...]

Haytham doesn't let his surprise show.

HAYTHAM

[Go on.]

POIHIPI

[Only he's not neglecting the land once he
owns it.]

Haytham waves the comment off.

HAYTHAM

[Pay him no attention. I often do.]

Haytham walks back to the others --
Poihipi is still at his side.

HAYTHAM (CONT'D)

[How much?]

POIHIPI

[Pay it no attention.]

HAYTHAM

[You're first cousins.]

POIHIPI

[We're all cousins.]

They rejoin their wives and Turīri.

ELIZABETH

(to Haytham)

[Where's Kōkā?]

HAYTHAM

[Where do you think? With the dead.]

They all turn towards the URUPA --
Kōkā is just sitting on a bench.

TURĪRĪ

[We have more guests.]

They all turn again --

A CARRIAGE is drawing close around the CLIFFSIDE --

On the DIRT ROAD that divides the FRONT PADDOCKS from the BEACH --

It passes through the open IRON GATE and short STONE WALLS...

... it parks near the CART.

The DRIVER climbs down --

Opens the door and helps the occupant out...

... a finely dressed OLDER WOMAN.

Faint lines etch her mature face.

Beautiful, nonetheless.

Haytham's breathing hitches at her sight.

This is ANASTASIA "LADY" CARROLL (39).

He abruptly moves towards her.

Wants to pick her up -- restrains himself.

He's never looked happier, though.

She reciprocates --

Holds his gloved LEFT HAND, rubs it affectionately.

Mereana is silent but can guess who this woman is.

Poihipi places a hand on Turīrī's shoulder --

Stopping him from going over.

Elizabeth is angry at her cousin's brazen behaviour --

Sympathetically takes his young wife's hand.

Haytham walks over with Lady Carroll, arm-in-arm.

HAYTHAM

Turīrī. Have you gathered your things?

TURĪRĪ

Yes, Uncle.

HAYTHAM

Get your horse.

TURĪRĪ

But--

ELIZABETH

(interrupts)

[Go.]

The boy is upset at being dismissed --
He pushes past his uncle to the barn out the back.

HAYTHAM

[We will have to resume this another time.]

ELIZABETH

[Not like this, Haeata.]

Elizabeth wraps her arms around Mereana.

ELIZABETH (CONT'D)

[You're welcome at our home any time. Follow
the coast and you'll find us.]

MEREANA

[Thank you.]

SUDDENLY --

Turiri bolts around THE MANOR on his HORSE.
Doesn't stop -- gallops down the FRONT PADDOCK.

Elizabeth and Poihipi hand the tray and kete to Mereana --
Depart in the cart.
Followed by the carriage.

HAYTHAM

My love, this is my wife, Mary Ann. My wife,
this is Anastasia, my Lady Carroll.

He leads his mistress towards THE MANOR.

Mereana looks up --
The KĀHU flies above them.

HAYTHAM (CONT'D)

Are you coming?

After some hesitation, she follows them.

DISSOLVE TO:

EXT. STREAM - LATER (NOON)

Calm water flows, following the embanking land.
Surrounded by belts of impenetrable forest.

HAYTHAM & ANASTASIA are already in the water.
Their clothes are in piles by the edge.
MEREANA uncomfortably stands next to them.
She is still dressed.

ANASTASIA

Come on, Mary Ann! You need to cool off.

Mereana fidgets with her skirt.
But she doesn't acquiesce.

HAYTHAM

Hina, get in here.

He sees her reluctance.
She looks to Anastasia, who's hands disappear under the water.
He jerks.
She undresses.
Her hands make for poor shields as she slips in.
The coolness is a welcome relief.
She paddles to them...

... eyeing where Anastasia's hands are.

ANASTASIA

"Hina?" Is that a pet name, Haytham? She
looks too tame to be feral.

HAYTHAM

It means--

MEREANA

(interrupts)
"Moon." Haeata, his real name, means "Dawn".

ANASTASIA

And how long have you been married, Moon?

MEREANA

Far shorter than you, Missus Carroll.

Anastasia struggles to hold in an untamed grin.

ANASTASIA

And you're happy?

MEREANA

Very.

ANASTASIA

And what about you, Dawn, are you happy?

His face contorts from discomfort.
He looks like he's struggling to breathe.
Anastasia's hands are still underwater.

Mereana, whose comfort has been non-existent --
Is hurt having to witness such brazen betrayal.

DISSOLVE TO:

EXT. GISBORNE, BOTANICAL GARDENS - EARLY MORNING (FLASHBACK)

The SUN has just risen.
There is no one else here except MEREANA --
She walks along a grassy bank.
This is where the Tareheru & Waimata Rivers converge.
She stops near a GAZEBO...

... and finds a PILE OF CLOTHES lying on the STEPS.
She inspects them closer.
They are finely made.
Apart from the creases, they are spotless.
A MAN'S clothes.
No hat.
A single BLACK GLOVE.
She looks around...

... there's no one else.
She doesn't want to linger.

SUDDENLY --
There's a break in the water.

A MAN rises out and up the bank.
 Water drips off his bare body.
 He stops in front of her.
 To her, he's like a painting.
 Like *John William Waterhouse's "Hylas with a Nymph"*.
 Perfect...

... until she glimpses his LEFT HAND --
 Its severe SCARS.
 Red and purple discolouring of the skin --
 A maze of wrinkles and splotches.
 Not something he was born with.

It twitches involuntarily.
 Like a nervous tick.
 He uses it to cover his crotch --
 She tears her eyes away...

... then shyly back to him.
 He looks amused.

EXT. STREAM - NOON (PRESENT)

MEREANA lies on the grassy bank, redressed.
 Her wet hair drips onto her shoulders.

HAYTHAM & ANASTASIA remain in the water.
 Closer now.
 No pretences.

Mereana stares at her reflection in the water.
 Like *John William Waterhouse's "Echo and Narcissus"*.
 She takes in every detail of the face looking back at her.
 The MOUTH.
 The CHEEKS.
 The NOSE.
 The EYES.
 A girl's face, not a woman's.
 Tears drop -- distort the reflection.
 She slaps the surface -- breaks the image.

MATCH CUT TO:

INT. THE MANOR, 1ST FLOOR - LIVING ROOM - NIGHT

Golden-brown liquid is poured into a SNIFTER.
HAYTHAM hands one to ANASTASIA & MEREANA.
They are sitting on the RUG in a circle --
In front of the roaring FIRE.
A BOX is next to him.

Mereana moves to stand up --

HAYTHAM
(commanding)
Sit.

She stops halfway...

... slinks back onto the floor.

ANASTASIA
How about some stories from the savage days
of old?

He flashes Anastasia a dangerous look.

HAYTHAM
Savage, Ana, is a nocuous word intended to
demonise. Are you implying something of your
present company?

She doesn't look scolded.

ANASTASIA
Are you implying the actions of your
ancestors weren't savage in nature?

HAYTHAM
I'm sure our ways were damning for the
missionaries, and they were compelled to
save us.
(sarcastic)
I do feel we are better for it.

Haytham takes a drink -- eyes Anastasia.
She avoids his gaze.

HAYTHAM

My great-grandfather, Pakura, and his brother, Hihi, were deeply respected by their people. One custom was to leave them something, usually food, as tribute. And one day, while Pakura and Hihi were away, a party of food-carriers fished from their waters and did not pay tribute. When the brothers returned, they were told of the party's transgression. They grabbed their spears and chased, pursuing the party as they neared their pā. The bounty was gathered and Tiritahua, their leader, was killed and eaten with the crayfish... Amusing little yarn.

ANASTASIA

What flawless logic can explain why their leader dies and not them?

HAYTHAM

Simple.

MEREANA

He knew better.

He pushes a BOX towards Mereana.

HAYTHAM

Open it.

She looks to Anastasia, who shrugs.

Mereana removes the lid...

... and finds dozens of LETTERS.
The box is almost overflowing with them.

HAYTHAM

Pick one.

MEREANA

Why?

HAYTHAM

To read it, of course.

She hesitates before plucking the top LETTER.
Opens it.

HAYTHAM (CONT'D)

For all of us to hear.

MEREANA

(reads aloud)

"My Haytham! I saw you in my dreams and felt
your warmth when I woke. My passions are
yours as yours are mine."

She looks to him -- he relishes it.
Anastasia also looks gleeful, as if remembering the words.
Mereana turns back to the letter.

MEREANA (CONT'D)

(wavering)

"My children, my husband - I think of
nothing but you. Whether I'm alone or
crowded, I feel your fingers. It's
unbearable. I beg you to return and
alleviate me of this torture. Don't make me
write again. Your Lady A."

She turns to him again, now with watery eyes.

HAYTHAM

If you wish to retire for the night, we can
amuse ourselves in your absence.

He reaches for a DECANTER of brownish-red liquid.

HAYTHAM (CONT'D)

And if you stay, you will play my games.

He pours some into everyone's glasses.
Mereana eyes the cocktail.

MEREANA

What is this?

HAYTHAM

Laudanum.

ANASTASIA

Opiate in liquid form. Try it, you'll feel better.

Mereana feels their EYES on her, expectantly.
She takes a sip.
The effect is immediate.

Anastasia abruptly stands up.
She begins unbuttoning her dress.

ANASTASIA

Preview of tonight's show.

She leaves the room, pulling the DOOR behind her.
Leaving the couple in silence.
Haytham takes a drink.
Mereana does not.

HAYTHAM

Did you enjoy it?

She looks at him, the hurt is evident.
He seems unaffected.

MEREANA

Do you wish for me to leave?

HAYTHAM

Do you?

She doesn't respond.
Takes a drink instead -- a large drink.

SUDDENLY --

The DOOR bursts open.
A middle-aged ARMY OFFICER (about 39) enters the dim room.
Scarlet HUSSAR JACKET -- navy-blue PANTALOONS --
A navy-blue HAT covers his auburn hair.

HAYTHAM

I wasn't aware we were at war.

ARMY OFFICER

Nothing of the sort, sir.

His voice is soft and low -- like it's been intentionally deepened.

Mereana is confused by this stranger.

The Officer closes the DOOR -- removes his HAT.

Undoes his JACKET -- peels it off.

Unbuttons his shirt --

Loosens his PANTALOONS --

The Officer steps forward -- into the light...

... but no Officer stands before Haytham & Mereana ...

... it's ANASTASIA in disguise.

ANASTASIA (CONT'D)

How did I do?

Haytham & Mereana sit in silence --

Both angered and fascinated by her androgyny.

Anastasia thinks she made a mistake.

Her unbuttoned shirt parts -- revealing flesh, neck to navel.

She sits in between them.

He kisses her, she kisses back.

Mereana looks away in shame.

She moves to stand up --

But is stopped by Anastasia's hand grabbing hers.

She's pulled back down.

Their passionate kiss ends.

Anastasia shifts towards Mereana.

The latter backs away until she bumps into the SOFA.

Their lips meet.

Whether it's the buzz of brandy and opium --

Or the fear of replacement --

Or a forbidden awakening --

Mereana stays and their exploration increases.

All three are peeling each other out of their clothes.

A chorus of moans.

Flesh on flesh.

Spilt glasses.

A lone TUMBLER OF BRANDY remains standing.

MATCH DISSOLVE TO:

EXT. URUPA - EARLY MORNING

The sky is shaded with GOLDEN BROWNS.

Like *Caspar David Friedrich's "Woman before the Rising Sun"*.

A PICKET FENCE forms a perimeter around harakeke and native trees.

Small GATES, at the north and west ends, grant access.

A GLASS BOTTLE of WATER sits atop both gate posts.

HAYTHAM opens the GATE and enters the tranquil space.

He finds KŌKĀ pulling weeds out from the tops of GRAVES.

Each waits for the other to begin.

KŌKĀ

(finally)

[When is she leaving?]

HAYTHAM

[It's been weeks, but I've not tired of her.
I doubt I ever will.]

KŌKĀ

[And your wife is she happy with this
arrangement?]

HAYTHAM

[She's a city Māori, everything you detest.]

KŌKĀ

[All prim. All English. Everything you're
attracted to. I was surprised she spoke the
language. I was surprised you married a
Māori.]

She finally looks at him -- stern and impatient.

He doesn't back down.

KŌKĀ (CONT'D)

[I know her parents. What did you promise David Manuel in exchange for his daughter's hand?]

HAYTHAM

[I'm a man, Nanny. That's my business.]

KŌKĀ

[Boys are more obedient.]

She returns to gardening.

KŌKĀ (CONT'D)

[You misunderstand her.]

HAYTHAM

[She's no mystery.]

KŌKĀ

[Yes, she is young and amiable, but our women speak on the paepae. Her line is equal to yours.]

He holds a ceaseless glare, one boiling with anger...

... it recedes back into his depths.

He leaves without washing his hands -- closes the GATE.

EXT. THE MANOR - BACKYARD GARDEN - LATER (MORNING)

Amongst the green lawn and fenced VEGETABLE GARDEN --
There are several rows of tall TOMATO VINES.

MEREANA stands on one side of the aisle, admiring the red fruit.

ANASTASIA is at the other end and on the other side.

She seems to not notice her.

A noticeable bump is forming in her stomach.

ANASTASIA

I find keeping track of your different names
to be a chore. Why is it so complicated?

MEREANA

My father is Portuguese. He named me
"Mariana" after his aunt. In my mother's
tongue, it became "Mereana". That proved too
difficult for yourself and others, so it
changed to "Mary Ann". I hate the latter.

ANASTASIA

And "Hina"?

MEREANA

Haeata's gift. The moon and dawn. One sleeps
while the other rises. Together, but never
touching. That's what we are. We're made for
each other.

Anastasia rubs her belly.
It doesn't escape Mereana.

MEREANA (CONT'D)

You may have him, he may have you, but you
will not have his name. His child, if it
survives, will not be a Halbert. We will
have a child, and then, he'll have no
further use for you.

ANASTASIA

My luggage may be in the guestroom, but
after all these weeks, I have yet to spend a
night in it. His seed grows inside me, and
you remain the same.

Anastasia flashes a dangerous look.
Moves down the next aisles.
Widening their SPLIT.

Mereana leaves the GARDEN in defeat.

EXT. OTIKI HILL, SUMMIT - LATER (NOON)

The TRIO rests atop the HILL --
Each is separated from the others.

HAYTHAM stands on the edge --
Looking out to a steadfast ISLAND amongst a choppy OCEAN.

Like *Caspar David Friedrich's "Wanderer above the Sea of Fog"*.
He is unusually restrained.

ANASTASIA & MEREANA are sitting on the ground --
Resting against a small boulder.
The former marvels at the father of her child.
Like *Walenty Wańkowicz's "Portrait of Adam Mickiewicz"*.
The latter faces the opposite direction.

MEREANA

Haytham sometimes calls you "Lady Carroll".
Is that true, or is he having a laugh?

ANASTASIA

The latter. It means mistress.

Mereana doesn't respond.

ANASTASIA (CONT'D)

Is it that shocking?

MEREANA

What's shocking is my only friend is my
husband's whore.

Anastasia looks back at her, shocked by the word.

ANASTASIA

You used to be a timid creature. Now look at
you.

MEREANA

My husband seeks another's comfort. I've
acclimated to the cold.

Mereana rises off the ground -- as does Anastasia.

MEREANA (CONT'D)

Still... you are my only friend here. How
pathetic is that?

They stand side by side.
Anastasia gazes out to the wild ocean below.
Mereana looks from her...

... to the cliff edge at their feet...

... to her "friend's" growing stomach.
It would be so easy...

... Mereana backs away...

... stopping before the imposing LIGHTHOUSE --
It appears to be leaning over, threatening to topple.

Haytham finally leaves the edge...

... sitting on the boulder.
Anastasia leans against him.

ANASTASIA

Is Mary Ann still suggesting a shaman?

HAYTHAM

Tohunga. Yes... but, there's more charlatans
and quacks than the real deal. There's even
Pākehā masquerading as them.

ANASTASIA

I hate that word.

HAYTHAM

It merely denotes those who are not Māori...
nothing related to pigs... How's the baby?

ANASTASIA

Growing strong.

HAYTHAM

He will be.

She kisses him, he kisses back before stepping away...

... sidling up next to his wife.

HAYTHAM

The last keeper and his wife were never
replaced. And now, this is little more than
a monument.

MEREANA

She leaves, Haeata. Immediately... And our
bed is our bed tonight.

He looks at her -- as if analysing every facet of her appearance...

... and nods in response.

He remains at her side.

She continues to be enamoured by the LIGHTHOUSE.

Its overwhelming size.

INT. THE MANOR, 2ND FLOOR - GUEST ROOM - NIGHT

ANASTASIA lies in BED alone.

The DRAPES are parted -- she's bathed in the cold moonlight.

This room is larger than a child's --

But more rudimentary than the MASTER BEDROOM.

She sees, from under the DOOR, a thin strip of WARM LIGHT --

TWO SHADOWS move past quickly --

Muffled giggles.

The hallway light goes out.

The sound of a door opening and closing.

She is alone.

SLOW MATCH DISSOLVE TO:

LATER: (EARLY MORNING)

Anastasia remains in the exact same position.

Everything has lapsed -- DARK to LIGHT -- in a matter of seconds.

She hasn't slept all night.

INT. THE MANOR, 2ND FLOOR - MASTER BEDROOM - SAME

Slivers of cold light filters through the parted DRAPES.

CLOTHES litter the floor.

HAYTHAM lies atop the large FOUR-POSTER BED.

Bare and exhausted.

The familiar GLOVE still covers his LEFT HAND.

MEREANA matches him, entwined in his arms.

She eyes his calm face -- searches for something.

He seems at peace.

She kisses him, he passionately responds.

QUICK FADE OUT & IN:

EXT. BEACH - LATER (MORNING)

Stormy skies and choppy waters.

MEREANA finds herself alone on the SHORE --

Like *Caspar David Friedrich's "The Monk by the Sea"*.

She watches a CARRIAGE follow the road...

... disappearing around the cliffs and out of view.

The sight doesn't fill her with satisfaction even though it should.

SUDDENLY --

HAYTHAM joins her.

There is tension in the air between them.

Thick and knowing.

MEREANA

That was cruel.

HAYTHAM

You wanted it this way.

She turns to leave --

HAYTHAM (CONT'D)

Hina.

She stops.

HAYTHAM (CONT'D)

You must feel humiliated. Ashamed. And yet,
proud of yourself. My wife is no child.

She looks at him with a danger in her eye.

Something not seen until now.

He seems undeterred.

HAYTHAM (CONT'D)

Have you heard of "Hinewahirangi's song"?

She doesn't answer.

HAYTHAM (CONT'D)

She was married to a great chief, who was killed near here by Ngapuhi. He fought with my grandfather against the Hauahu. After his tangi, she returned to her people with their young son. She wished to remarry, but his people considered that an insult to his mana--

MEREANA

(interrupts)

And they took the boy and brought him back here. Hinewahirangi was forbidden from seeing him, so she implored a southerly breeze to carry her to Whangaokeno - that island (points to it) right there.

He looks pleased by her knowledge.
Doesn't attempt to interfere.

MEREANA (CONT'D)

She would look out and see her little boy, satisfied that she was never far from him.

HAYTHAM

The child is important to me, just as you are.

MEREANA

As a wife should be.

She passes him...

... mounts her HORSE and takes off down the shoreline.
Leaving him alone.

MINUTES LATER:

Under the shade of the great PŌHUTUKAWA --
A beacon atop the DUNES --
Haytham sits on one of the bench-like branches.

HAYTHAM'S VOICE

(gentle, distant echo)

Hear me.

All sound disappears.

No ocean waves.

No wind through the tussock.

No birdsong.

SUDDENLY --

A stunning WOMAN IN WHITE stands before him.

Pristine and elegantly dressed.

She smiles at seeing him.

Takes in the air around them.

Back on her whenua.

This is KAIKIRI (27), his mother.

KAIKIRI

[I haven't heard you in some time.]

She moves to sit beside him.

HAYTHAM

[I haven't needed you.]

The words sting.

She can't help but lose her graceful aura.

KAIKIRI

[It must be too much for you, then.]

HAYTHAM

[Was it right to take Hinewahirangi's son
from her?]

She brushes loose hair behind his ear.

KAIKIRI

[That was our way.]

HAYTHAM

[But as a mother...?]

KAIKIRI

[That would never heal.]

He avoids her gaze, a distance returns in his demeanour.

A tightness in the shoulders.

The weight above his brow.

She leans over and kisses his cheek.

He looks to her --

But she is gone.

All sound returns.

He remains alone.

EXT. FRONT PADDOCK/THE MANOR - MINUTES LATER

HAYTHAM journeys across the land, lost.

Lost to his thoughts.

Lost to his surroundings...

... as he passes through the GATE...

... crosses the TENNIS COURT...

... and approaches the STEPS --

All sound disappears.

No crunching of grass.

No birdsong.

No ocean waves.

Nothing to hear.

He looks to the left...

... no one.

Looks to the right...

... no one.

He rounds to the side of the house...

... Passes a ROW OF TREES...

... stopping under a LOW-HANGING BRANCH.

The silent wind picks up -- the branch begins thrashing around --

He turns --

On the other side of the GATE is THE VEILED WOMAN.

She approaches --

Startling him --

The branch snaps --

Cracks him on the head --

He falls to the ground, blood trailing down his forehead.

The Veiled Woman stands over him.

Only a hint of her features can be seen in the BLACK SILK COVERING.

A BLACK VEIL slips over him --

QUICK SMASH OUT & IN:

MINUTES LATER: (LATE MORNING)

Haytham finds himself on the ground.

He frantically looks around...

... no one.

Putting a hand to his throbbing head, he pulls it away --

BLOOD.

He pulls himself up and retreats to THE MANOR.

MEREANA (PRE-LAP)

This is a beautiful home.

EXT. TE ARAROA, BRISTOW HOME - LATER (NOON)

MEREANA & JAMES stand before his home.

A similar Victorian-styled villa, only half the size.

One storey.

It looks out to the ocean, a stone's throw away.

Her HORSE is hitched to the nearby fence.

JAMES

It's a shanty compared to The Manor.

MEREANA

They are not so different.

He looks her over.

JAMES

Will you come inside?

INT. BRISTOW HOME - LIVING ROOM - MINUTES LATER

The space is similar to The Manor --
Only lacking the distinctive wall of POU and TUKUTUKU panels.
A sanitised version of its counterpart.

JAMES & MEREANA are seated on facing sofas.
A dark wood COFFEE TABLE separates them.
They drink tea from porcelain cups and saucers.
No frilly floral patterns -- a solid teal outside and white inside.
She's barely touched hers before setting it down.

JAMES

Do you enjoy it this far from civilisation?

MEREANA

It has been difficult, but I have adjusted.

JAMES

You must miss your parents, though, and the
city.

MEREANA

Yes. I apologise for arriving emptyhanded
and uninvited.

He takes a drink.

JAMES

Not at all. I like the surprise. You've
married my cousin, that makes us family.

He eyes her untouched cup.

JAMES (CONT'D)

Not your particular brew?

MEREANA

I like it fine.

JAMES

I can get you something else.

She picks up the cup and saucer...

... reluctantly takes a drink.

MEREANA

I like it.

He eyes her.

JAMES

I saw a carriage come from Rangiata. Don't tell me Haytham's left us again so soon.

MEREANA

He's a busy man. I've gathered he comes and goes as he pleases.

JAMES

Why would he leave you unattended? I only mean, a beautiful woman should be kept accompanied.

MEREANA

Am I not?

JAMES

I feel very lucky.

MEREANA

So you should.

He laughs.

She laughs, too, but it's one of embarrassment.

She looks away.

JAMES

(amused)

That was very good.

MEREANA

I'm sorry. I shouldn't have said that.

JAMES

I'll keep it a secret.

He takes a drink.

She eyes him.

MEREANA

For cousins, yourself and Haeata aren't very close.

He sets the cup and saucer down.

JAMES

So sours my mug of milk.

MEREANA

If we are whanau, we should settle our differences.

JAMES

Haytham is never satisfied with his lot. He's been that way since he could talk.

MEREANA

I know you want parcels of land - his land.

JAMES

I have as much claim to it, if not more.

MEREANA

To what end? Profit? Do you wish to see the city claw its way out here?

JAMES

Why the sudden interest? Haytham would never send you to barter his business.

She remains silent.

JAMES (CONT'D)

Oh... You've put me in an uncomfortable position.

MEREANA

That's not an answer.

JAMES

Ask again.

MEREANA

Your price?

JAMES

There's only one trade I'm interested in.

He looks to her, pointedly...

... it's a look she understands.
She's frequently seen it on Haytham these past weeks.

She slowly rises from the sofa...

... and closes the DOOR.
She moves into the centre of the room.
She looks at him and removes her clothes...

... steps out of the pile, covering herself.
His gaze is unbroken.
He steps towards her...

... bends down...

... picks up her dress...

... and hands it to her.

JAMES

My cousin has you trained well, but that was
not what I meant.

She takes the dress, stunned by his words.

He abruptly leaves the room.
Leaves her naked and alone.
Humiliation quickly subsides to anger.
She picks up her cup and saucer --
Hurls them at the wall with a shriek --
They crash into many pieces --
Liquid streaks the wallpaper.

INT. THE MANOR, 2ND FLOOR - MASTER BEDROOM - NIGHT

A single CANDLE rests on a nearby BEDSIDE DRAWER.
It flickers and barely lights the room.

HAYTHAM passes the WINDOW and its PARTED DRAPES.
The moonlight beams on him...

... before he moves on from it.
Standing on his side of the large FOUR-POSTER BED --
He slips his WAISTCOAT off -- onto the FLOOR.

MEREANA enters the room and gently closes the DOOR.
She eyes him, demurely and avoids his gaze.
Sitting down at the VANITY, she brushes her hair.
She looks at him through the MIRROR --
Sees his injury.

MEREANA

Haeata, you're hurt.

She rushes to him -- examines his forehead.

HAYTHAM

Leave me be.

He brushes her off.
She backs away...

... looks angry.
He holds up his hands, placatingly.

HAYTHAM (CONT'D)

I'm. Damn branch snapped... I appreciate
your concern.

She calms down and returns to the vanity.
She eyes him in the reflection.

MEREANA

Your business, how does it fare?

Seated on the edge of the bed, he removes his BOOTS.

HAYTHAM

If you want, I could enquire about a
publisher. You've almost finished?

She doesn't believe the words he's saying.

Then remembers other words he's said.

MEREANA

But you said only if--

HAYTHAM

(interrupts)

Can't I change my mind?

She shakes her head, smiles at him -- turns away.
He's watching her through the mirror.

MEREANA

And James?

HAYTHAM

That bastard is the least of my worries.

She looks directly at him.

MEREANA

He deserves nothing from you.

He eyes her -- a danger flashes over him...

... before it softens.

HAYTHAM

(gently)

If you have something to say, say it.

MEREANA

Are you... disappointed?

HAYTHAM

I'm disappointed it's only the two of us.

MEREANA

Would you prefer Ana remained?

He peels off his SHIRT instead of an answer.
She stews waiting for it.

HAYTHAM

(finally)

No.

She removes her DRESS.

He pulls off his TROUSERS --
Kicks his removed clothes into a pile.

Now naked, he slips under the covers.
Mereana -- not nearly as exposed -- joins him.

MEREANA

(finally)

If we saw a tohunga--

Haytham reaches over and gently cups her face.
Silences her.

HAYTHAM

(interrupts)

We just need to try a little harder. Hmm?

She rolls away and blows out her CANDLE.
He eyes her -- she has her back to him.
He snuffs out his own.

QUICK SMASH OUT & IN:

MONTAGE - HAYTHAM'S DREAM

A series of slow, molasses-like images.
"Frozen" memories -- as if they're suspended in time.

- (POV) We trek up the TRACK of OTIKI HILL.
It snakes and climbs -- through dense foliage.
- (POV) The LIGHTHOUSE dwarfs us.
It appears to be leaning over -- threatening to topple.
- (POV) The RED DOOR entices -- a siren in this sea of GREEN.
It opens on its own.
We move closer --
- (POV) The CONCRETE FLOOR is broken and dug out.
At the foot of the STAIRCASE -- there is a small PIT --
A BLACK VEIL slips over us --

END MONTAGE

INT. THE MANOR, 2ND FLOOR - MASTER BEDROOM - NIGHT

HAYTHAM startles awake.

His face is slipping off the pillow -- one arm hanging off the edge.
Like *Henry Wallis' "The Death of Chatterton"*.

A shaft of LIGHT grazes over his face...

... before moving on.

The light returns...

... then leaves again.

He checks MEREANA...

... she is still asleep --
The light shines on him again.

Through the partially parted DRAPES --
The light blinds him again.

He moves to the drapes -- opens them up.
Atop OTIKI HILL, the white light of the LIGHTHOUSE shines out --
Across the land and returns to him, blindingly --

FADE TO WHITE & DISSOLVE TO:

EXT. THE MANOR - LATE MORNING

Under the shade of a nearby TREE --
Out from the blistering heat of the sun.
MEREANA & KŌKĀ are lying on blanket-covered grass.
A familiar NOTEBOOK is being written in.
Something thick is being held underneath it.

HAYTHAM & TURĪRĪ have the RACQUETS --
Trading the back-and-forth of TENNIS on the GRASS COURT.
The TĀNE wear loose linen shirts.
The WĀHINE are shaded in light coloured dresses.

Enjoying the outdoors -- and the picnic.

Haytham hits the ball, generous, and easy for Turiri.

TURIRI

Uncle.

HAYTHAM

Yes.

Turiri hits it back with more force.

TURIRI

Are you having a baby yet?

Haytham glances at Mereana -- smacks the ball...

... it flies outside of the COURT.

Turiri runs to pick it up...

... whacks it over the NET.

TURIRI (CONT'D)

[Can I live here with you?]

Surprised, Haytham doesn't reply.

The ball bounces past him.

TURIRI

Match!

HAYTHAM

[Is that what you want?]

TURIRI

[Yes.]

Haytham walks back...

... retrieves the ball.

HAYTHAM

I'll speak to your parents.

Turiri is overjoyed.

TURĪRĪ

Really?!

He taps the ball over to his nephew.
They continue their game.

MEANWHILE --

Under the nearby TREE.
The two wāhine have ceased watching.
They remain in silence.
MEREANA closes her NOTEBOOK.
Looks to Kōkā.

MEREANA

(finally)

[Kōkā... Have there been any young women
here besides myself?]

KŌKĀ

[Haeata has had many women.]

MEREANA

[But has it only been the two of you since
his parents died?]

Kōkā shifts, uncomfortable.

KŌKĀ

[No.]

MEREANA

[Your husband?]

Mereana waits, patiently.

KŌKĀ

(finally)

[Are you happy with your husband?]

Mereana looks away in embarrassment.

MEREANA

[No... and some days, yes.]

Kōkā sees Haytham leave the COURT to enter THE MANOR.

She picks up her CARVED CANE.

KŌKĀ

[I raised him as well as I could. Maybe he
needed more than that.]

Standing up is a chore for the old kuia --

Mereana helps her.

She smiles at the younger wahine.

Hobbles to the house.

Mereana returns to her NOTEBOOK --

Slips something out from under it.

She examines the FOLDING PHOTOGRAPH.

On the left is an ADOLESCENT GIRL.

On the right is a YOUNG MAN --

Whose visage is unmistakably that of a YOUNGER HAYTHAM.

The girl remains an unknown.

She closes the FRAME.

INT. THE MANOR, 1ST FLOOR - HALLWAY - SAME

HAYTHAM returns from the KITCHEN --

Holding a WATER PITCHER.

He's coming to the FRONT DOOR --

KŌKĀ (O.S)

[Haeata? Come here.]

Retracting his steps, he enters the nearest room...

INT. THE MANOR, 1ST FLOOR - LIVING ROOM - CONTINUOUS

KŌKĀ is seated on one of the two SOFAS, facing him.

HAYTHAM sits across from her.

KŌKĀ

[You have one child on the way, and now
you're taking another in?]

HAYTHAM

[Two sons. She hasn't given me one. After
all these months...]

KŌKĀ

[What does your wife say to that?]

HAYTHAM

(brushes her off)

[Nanny, I tire of this.]

He abruptly leaves for the doorway --
She suddenly stands.

KŌKĀ

[Don't turn your back on me! Have you
forgotten who I am?]

Taken aback by her abruptness, her thunderous voice --
He saunters back into the room.
He's noticeably docile, like a scolded schoolboy.
He sits back down.
He sets the PITCHER down.

KŌKĀ (CONT'D)

(levelled but no less stern)

[You've forgotten yourself. You've forgotten
your parents.]

HAYTHAM

[I'm here, they're not. If you want to dig
up the past, go to the cemetery.]

KŌKĀ

[This is about you.]

He leans back into the sofa --
Spreading an arm out across the back.

HAYTHAM

(finally)

[My father's people were branded Kūpapa; my
mother's people, your people, were Hauhau.]

KŌKĀ

[Their love was no lie despite their
differing sides.]

She loses her simmer.

His attention is solely on her.
Her simple words have affected him.

KŌKĀ (CONT'D)

[Your grandfather secured our freedom. He brought peace, and to cement it he arranged your parents' marriage.]

Haytham's sedate.
Takes it all in.

KŌKĀ (CONT'D)

[You are... what you are, but everyone else must come first.]

She waits for him to retort -- refute -- say anything.
He doesn't.

KŌKĀ (CONT'D)

[There's an important meeting soon - one such responsibility.]

He merely slips off the sofa --
And walks out of the ROOM.

EXT. THE MANOR - SAME

MEREANA checks on her ROSES at the foot of the PORCH.
They're flourishing.
She smells one -- enjoys it.
Like *John William Waterhouse's "The Soul of the Rose"*.

She spots one that is completely dead.
All of its petals have fallen off.
The stalk is withered and brown.

SUDDENLY --

White specks blow into the flower bed.
She looks and finds it's PAINT flecking off THE MANOR.
Unnatural.

EXT. TE ARAROA - LATER (AFTERNOON)

Two HORSES enter the small coastal town --
ONE ridden by HAYTHAM with MEREANA behind him.

The OTHER, ridden by TURĪRĪ.
Without pomp or ceremony, they hitch outside the GENERAL STORE.

HAYTHAM

(to Mereana)

One moment.

Haytham motions for her to wait.
He escorts his nephew inside.

INT. GENERAL STORE & POST OFFICE - CONTINUOUS

Shelves of jars and cans --
Barrels -- Clothes -- Firearms --
Shovels -- Number 8 wire -- a store of general items.
A MAN not much older than HAYTHAM is behind the counter.
He spots Turīrī and his Uncle right away.
This is HONE HIKI (about 30).

HONE HIKI

[Haeata! And little Turīrī.]

The boy immediately runs to the LOLLY JARS.

HAYTHAM

[Hello, Hone.] Turīrī's in the market for
sweets. Put it on my account. I'll be across
the road.

HONE HIKI

Are you sick?

HAYTHAM

No.

HONE HIKI

Is your wife...?

HAYTHAM

No.

(to Turīrī)

[Don't go overboard. And don't forget your
siblings.]

(to Hone Hiki)

See he doesn't make me a beggar, cousin.

EXT. TE ARAROA - SAME

MEREANA sits on the GENERAL STORE'S PORCH --
 Takes stock of the small town.
 Even now, in her dresses, she seems out of place.

Across the road is the DOCTOR'S OFFICE.
 Around the corner, towards the ocean, is an ANCIENT PŌHUTUKAWA.
 A MARAE is back down the road they travelled.
 And across the bridge is a small WHITE CHAPEL.

SUDDENLY --

The DOOR swings open -- HAYTHAM descends the steps.
 She follows as they cross the road...

EXT. DOCTOR'S OFFICE - CONTINUOUS

HAYTHAM knocks on the DOOR...

... a few moments later, a MAN with a gentle face opens it.
 This is DR WARIHI BROUGHTON (early 30s).

DR BROUGHTON

Cousin!

The men shake hands and hongī.

DR BROUGHTON (CONT'D)

[How are you?]

HAYTHAM

[No complaints.] This is her.

Dr Broughton and Mereana hongī as well.

DR BROUGHTON

Mereana, I'm Doctor Broughton. I'm told
 you're here for a check-up.

MEREANA

Funny. I wasn't told.

HAYTHAM

You know now, Hina.

DR BROUGHTON

Come along, Missus Halbert. It's not as cold
in here as it is outside.

She enters -- Dr Broughton closes the DOOR.

EXT. GENERAL STORE & POST OFFICE - CONTINUOUS

HAYTHAM sits down on the PORCH -- lights a CIGAR.
He rubs his gloved LEFT HAND -- as if soothing a persistent pain.
And smokes in peace...

... until the DOOR opens and out walks HONE HIKI and TURĪRĪ.
They sit on either side of Haytham.
The boy is grinning at his bounty.
He eyes his nephew's purchases -- steals a HARDBOILED LOLLY.

HAYTHAM

[How bad?]

HONE HIKI

[You'll be fine.]

Hone hands an ENVELOPE to Haytham.

HONE HIKI (CONT'D)

Letter for you.

Haytham takes it.

The envelope reads: *"Deliver to Lord H"*

HONE HIKI (CONT'D)

Shall I burn it?

Haytham doesn't respond.

Opens it up...

... keeps the LETTER guarded.

It reads:

*"Join us as we celebrate
CAROLINE WILLIAMSON'S
34th birthday party.
Sunday
April 22*

Masonic Hotel

At the bottom of the page, there is a handwritten message.
 It reads: "*Do come for a night of fun, my little duck.*"
 The letter leaves him disturbed.
 He quickly pockets it and quietly smokes.

HONE HIKI (CONT'D)

[Haeata?]

HAYTHAM

[City gossip.]

The two men share a look -- a silent exchange.
 Haytham offers Hone a CIGAR -- it's accepted.
 They quietly smoke as Tūriri devours his lollies.

Across the road --
 MEREANA & DR BROUGHTON exit his OFFICE.
 Haytham paces towards them.

EXT. DOCTOR'S OFFICE - CONTINUOUS

DR BROUGHTON cordially shakes MEREANA'S hand.
 She's in good spirits -- it must've gone well.

DR BROUGHTON

Take care, Mereana. I'm only sorry I
 couldn't help you more.

MEREANA

You've been more than helpful. Goodbye,
 Doctor.

She smiles again before crossing the road.
 Without a glance at HAYTHAM.
 Leaving the two cousins.

HAYTHAM

[Well?]

Dr Broughton spares a quick look to Mereana...

... who's approaching TŪRIRI & HONE HIKI --
 Meeting the latter for the first time.

The boy shares his lollies with her.

HAYTHAM (CONT'D)

[Can she conceive?]

DR BROUGHTON

[She declined in favour of a tohunga.]

ACROSS THE ROAD --

She can feel they're talking about her.

HAYTHAM

[And you allowed that?]

DR BROUGHTON

[It's the patient's choice. Shall I examine
you?]

Haytham blows a cloud of smoke into his cousin's face --
Dr Broughton coughs, unimpressed.

HAYTHAM

Send me the bill.

DR BROUGHTON

But I didn't--

HAYTHAM

(interrupts)

You're needed here.

Dr Broughton relents.

They farewell each other -- handshake and hongī.

Haytham crosses the road.

EXT. COASTAL ROAD - MINUTES LATER (AFTERNOON)

They trot down the road --

TŪRIRI on his own HORSE --

MEREANA rides behind HAYTHAM on his.

He's surly at the thought of her right now.

MEREANA

You have a lot of cousins.

HAYTHAM

And you don't?

MEREANA

My father married three chief's daughters. I know what a large family is like.

HAYTHAM

Is that disgust in your voice?

MEREANA

What were you and the good doctor discussing?

He looks at her -- over his shoulder.
Briefly.

HAYTHAM

You. Us.

MEREANA

Us?

HAYTHAM

Must everything be a question?

MEREANA

With you, there are many.

HAYTHAM

You may learn everything once you give me a child.

Hurt by his words, she becomes silent.

EXT. COASTAL ROAD, PERETO'S HOMESTEAD - MINUTES LATER

HAYTHAM leads them to a small HOUSE at the foot of HILLS --
Flanked by PADDOCKS.
POIHIPI & ELIZABETH see them approach.
Their young children -- TWO GIRLS -- are playing with the KURĪ.
A HORSE and CART are nearby.

TURĪRĪ hitches his HORSE --
Sprints to his SISTERS to share the bounty.

HAYTHAM dismounts and helps MEREANA off his HORSE.
He also hitches it to a nearby POST.

POIHIPI

[Haeata.]

HAYTHAM

[Afternoon, cousin. Elizabeth.]

Elizabeth warmly embraces Mereana but not Haytham.

MEREANA

[I hope you don't mind, Turīri was very
persuasive in town.]

ELIZABETH

[Who did he learn that from?]

POIHIPI

(harsh)

[Darling.]

Haytham waves it off.

HAYTHAM

[No, she's right. That's why I'm here.]

The parents share a glance.
Mereana doesn't know what's going on.

HAYTHAM (CONT'D)

[Turīri asked to live with me. I accepted.]

ELIZABETH

(surprised)

[You... did what?]

The anger is clear on Elizabeth's face.
Poihipi is quiet, more in thought.

ELIZABETH (CONT'D)

[My son will never be yours.]

HAYTHAM

[He will remain yours, Elizabeth. He will be mine as well. We are childless. This is our way.]

Elizabeth launches herself at Haytham in a violent fit --
She is restrained by Poihipi.
Mereana is startled.
Haytham remains calm.

In the distance, the children have stopped.
They are watching.

Elizabeth looks Haytham in the eyes.
Hers are filled with fury.

HAYTHAM'S VOICE

(gentle, distant echo)

Calm down.

A blankness fills Elizabeth's eyes --
She goes slack in her husband's hold.

HAYTHAM'S VOICE (CONT'D)

(gentle, distant echo)

You will agree. Yes?

ELIZABETH

(hollow)

Yes. I agree.

Elizabeth rubs her temples.
Poihipi holds her, concerned.
Mereana glances at a nonchalant Haytham.
She can't understand the sudden turn.

HAYTHAM

[What says you, cousin?]

The two men share a silent exchange.
Poihipi nods.
Haytham beams.

HAYTHAM (CONT'D)

[Turīrī! Pack your things, we'll come get them later!]

Turīrī races into the house.
His two sisters follow after him.

Haytham helps a confused Mereana back onto his horse.
Elizabeth is left sobbing in her husband's arms.
Poihipi does his best to soothe her.

EXT. COASTAL ROAD - MINUTES LATER

TURĪRĪ rides alongside HAYTHAM.
MEREANA keeps glancing at her husband.

TURĪRĪ

Uncle, must I call you father now?

HAYTHAM

Is that uncomfortable to say?

TURĪRĪ

I am not sure.

HAYTHAM

I suppose if I'd raised you since birth...
No, you don't have to.

Haytham can almost feel Mereana's mind.
It's racing with questions and puzzle pieces.

HAYTHAM (CONT'D)

Ride ahead and tell Kōkā the news.

Turīrī takes off.
Leaving husband and wife alone.

HAYTHAM (CONT'D)

Yes?

MEREANA

How did you do that? Why did you do that?

HAYTHAM

With his heir under my roof, Poihipi
wouldn't dare sell his land to James.

MEREANA

This is about the land?

HAYTHAM

No, he's always been my son. He's always
wanted a brother.

Mereana grows silent.
Feels the jab at her womb.

TAWHAIKURA (PRE-LAP)

Kia tina!

INT. HINERUPE MARAE - WHARENUI - MORNING

Inside this cavernous space --
Walls of CARVINGS and TUKUTUKU PANELS --
HARAKEKE MATS and above --
RAFTER PAINTINGS of black, white, and red.
WOODEN CHAIRS are placed in a circle.
All are occupied.

HAYTHAM & TURĪRĪ --

With MEREANA & KŌKĀ on either side of them --

POIHIPI & his father, TUHAKA (65) --

HONE HIKI & his parents, RANIERA & HIRIA (both late 60s) --

DR WARIHI BROUGHTON & his father, TAWHAIKURA (70) --

And finally, JAMES BRISTOW, directly across from Haytham.

Tawhaikura is standing, leaning on his CARVED CANE.
He's old but not yet frail.

CHORUS

Tina!

TAWHAIKURA

Hāumi e! Hui e!

CHORUS

Tāiki e!

Tawhaikura lowers himself down --
 Warihi holds his father's chair still.

TAWHAIKURA

[James. You brought us here. Stand.]

James leaves his chair -- looks around at everyone...

... settles on Mereana --
 She avoids him.
 The exchange doesn't escape Haytham.

JAMES

[It's true, I asked for this... We need to think about what's best for our futures. There are some on this land that need not worry about money, but there are many more who do. In this world we need money. To survive. To prosper. For the future. This land is the answer--]

HAYTHAM

(interrupts)

[How much?]

JAMES

[What, Haytham?]

HAYTHAM

[Money, James. What are you offering? How much did you offer Poihipi?]

Haytham receives querying looks from his relatives.

POIHIPI

[I doesn't matter because I didn't accept.]

Haytham takes the opportunity to leave his chair.
 James remains standing.

HAYTHAM

[My parents may have passed when I was young, but they taught me right. And I may not be here as much as I should, but my door is always open. Never have I refused you--]

JAMES

(interrupts)

[Please don't make this about yourself. This house cannot contain all of you.]

HAYTHAM

[I don't consider us family, nor even relatives. Therefore, I have no qualms with killing you right here and making amends with your mother.]

KŌKĀ

(warningly)

Haeata.

HAYTHAM

[It was a slip of the tongue.]

He looks to his elders.

HAYTHAM (CONT'D)

(captivating)

[This land needs safeguards, not auctions. Our fathers traded wheat and crops up north - made fortunes. Where has that industrious thinking gone? We have boats. We have fertile land. That's where our answers lie. My father-in-law, Rewi Manuel, owns orchards in the city. He currently lacks the means to trade his produce in Auckland. With my ship, we could haul a load every month. If we restarted the crops here, there would be no limits to our growth!]

James limply claps.

JAMES

[Bravo, Haytham. Touching but deeply hypocritical. (to the elders) We've all seen his antics. Buying land. Banishing relatives. Robbing heirs.]

POIHIPI

(harsh)

[James.]

Turīrī glances from Haytham to his father.
 Haytham holds in his anger.
 Mereana squeezes his hand.

JAMES

[You would let this fiend tell you what to do?]

Tawhaikura bangs his CANE like a gavel.
 He stands --
 His son, Warihi, steadies his rise.

TAWHAIKURA

[We must take all aspects into consideration. We are many but a single tribe. I'm surrounded by my youngers. Age and death frequently occupy my mind now... "Now," is a precocious thing. The very moment we enter "now," we exit it for another.]

HAYTHAM

[Uncles, please. If we lose this land, where will we go? To the city?]

TAWHAIKURA

[Then tell us, young chief, why are you eating alone?]

HAYTHAM

[It wasn't so long ago that we almost lost everything if it wasn't for my grandfather. That is something that I cannot, will not allow to happen.]

Haytham walks out --
 Leaving behind his silent, contemplative relatives.

INT. THE MANOR, 2ND FLOOR - LATER (NIGHT)

HAYTHAM stands outside a BEDROOM.
 The door is open.
 He looks rather subdued.

The drapes are open.
Pale moonlight bleeds through the windows.
He enters...

...and finds KŌKĀ --
Resting in her CHAIR, wrapped in a thick blanket.
A lit CANDLE nearby.

HAYTHAM

[Are you cold, Nanny? Do you want another
blanket?]

She merely shakes her head.
He closes the drapes --
The space grows smaller, intimate.
He pulls a STOOL over to sit next to her.
Takes her HAND in his.

HAYTHAM (CONT'D)

[Was Mother worried about what I am?]

KŌKĀ

[Why ask now?]

He shifts on the stool, uncomfortably.

HAYTHAM

[Do you worry?]

KŌKĀ

[You are matakite.]

HAYTHAM

[Does that mean I can do whatever I want, or
must I be... responsible?]

KŌKĀ

[Were you not today?]

HAYTHAM

(begging)
[Nanny, please. Tell me what to do.]

KŌKĀ

[There must be balance, Haeata, in the material and spiritual.]

HAYTHAM

[And if what I want goes against that?]

She gives him the "you know the answer" look.
He nods, understanding.

HAYTHAM (CONT'D)

[Balance.]

He leans over and kisses her cheek --
Hiding behind the doorway is TURĪRĪ.
He moves out of sight as Haytham leaves the ROOM.

DISSOLVE TO:

INT. THE MANOR, 2ND FLOOR - MASTER BEDROOM - LATER

HAYTHAM & MEREANA are lying in the large FOUR POSTER BED.
The couple is close, facing each other.
Both are still awake.
She turns over -- backs into his chest.
He places an arm protectively over her stomach.
And nestles into her.

QUICK FADE OUT & SMASH IN:

EXT. RANGIATA, FRONT PADDOCK - DAY (1883)

A younger HAYTHAM (20) races through the open IRON GATE --
Atop his HORSE, they cross the grassy plains --

INT. THE MANOR, 2ND FLOOR - KEITA'S BEDROOM - MINUTES LATER

HAYTHAM stands in front of a CHILD'S BED.
An ADOLESCENT GIRL lies on it.
Sweating and pale.
A far-off gaze.
A face we've seen in a PHOTOGRAPH.
This is KEITA (15), his sister.
She cradles a small bundle, wrapped in BLACK SILK.
The WHITE SHEET covering her lower body is stained with BLOOD.

HAYTHAM

Keita...

Hearing his voice, she finally sees him.

KEITA

I'm sorry--

He crosses the room.

HAYTHAM

Who else knows?

KEITA

I only wanted us to be a family.

He looks over the bloody sheet.

HAYTHAM

We still are.

He sees the bundle in her arms is silent and unmoving.
He's relieved.

KEITA

Where were you? You said you'll never leave.

He finally meets her gaze.
Doesn't answer.

EXT. OTIKI HILL, SUMMIT - MINUTES LATER

Haytham stands before the imposing LIGHTHOUSE.

The RED DOOR opens on its own...

HAYTHAM'S POV - SUMMIT

We step forward...

... again, and again...

... as if in a trance.
We cross through the DOORWAY --

A BLACK VEIL slips over us --

QUICK SMASH OUT & FADE IN:

EXT. URUPA - MORNING (PRESENT)

HAYTHAM stands before a grave --
The HEADSTONE is obscured.
He holds two withered ROSES.
The vibrant colours have rotted to a sour brown.
There are few petals left.

Outside the FENCE and unseen by him is THE VEILED WOMAN.

He inspects the dead flowers.
Twists them in his hands.
A distraction for his mind.
Keeping memories at bay.

Above, the KĀHU circles them.

The Veiled Woman is now inside the fence.

He finally lies the flowers down.
Not happy with them.
He leans back down to collect them --
Hears approaching footsteps.
Turns around --
Face-to-face with The Veiled Woman.
Startled, he steps back --
Loses his footing --
Falls --
Collides with the headstone.

SMASH OUT.

OVER BLACK:

TURĪRĪ'S VOICE
(muffled)
Uncle...? Can you hear me...? Uncle...?

FADE IN:

LATER: (NOON)

HAYTHAM is lying atop an old grave.
The HEADSTONE reads:

Keita Halbert
1868 - 1883
"Sorrow of yore, forever in life."

TURĪRĪ is kneeling beside him --
Looking him over, concerned.

TURĪRĪ
Uncle, are you alright?

Haytham lifts his head up --
Revealing a brown-red stain on the grass underneath.
He's drowsy and uses his nephew to prop himself upright.

TURĪRĪ (CONT'D)
Uncle?

HAYTHAM
(harsh)
I'm fine.

The boy grows silent.
Haytham sees his effect, loses all tension.

HAYTHAM
I'm sorry. Help me inside.

Turirī acts as a crutch for his uncle.
They slowly hobble out of the cemetery.
Haytham clutches the back of his head.

TURĪRĪ
Were you sleeping with the dead?

HAYTHAM
Only the living will kill you.

DISSOLVE TO:

INT. THE MANOR, 1ST FLOOR - LIVING ROOM - LATER (NIGHT)

HAYTHAM rests on the SOFA.

TURĪRĪ

Uncle, can I come?

HAYTHAM

(harsh)

No.

The boy sulks, returns to his book.

MEREANA

Why not? The city will be exciting for a
boy.

He roughly shrugs her off -- leaves the room.
She's hurt by his aloofness...

... a DOOR is heard opening then closing.

Undeterred, she follows him.

EXT. THE MANOR - CONTINUOUS

It's dreadfully dark outside --
The FULL MOON is hidden behind a blanket of thick CLOUDS.

MEREANA struggles to see ahead of her...

... but hears a soft whimper...

... it grows with every step along the PORCH...

... she finds HAYTHAM seated on the floor --
His back against the railing --
Crying -- his head in his hands.
He hears her approach --
Pulls himself together and stands up...

... but can't resist rubbing his gloved left hand --
As if soothing a persistent pain.

MEREANA

I didn't think you could cry.

He doesn't respond.

She stands next to him -- rubs his shoulders and back, soothingly.

MEREANA (CONT'D)

It's alright.

He rubs his forehead -- succumbs to his grief.

The clouds part -- they're bathed in cold moonlight.

Like *Caspar David Friedrich's "Man and Woman Contemplate the Moon"*.

FADE OUT.

OVER BLACK:

The sound of shuffling -- muffled creaking...

... like careful footsteps...

FADE IN:

INT. TE AUTE COLLEGE - HALLWAY - NIGHT (1872)

A YOUNG WOMAN creeps down a long, dark hallway.

A simply dressed woman -- black gown -- white apron and bonnet.

She holds her HEELED SHOES.

The long rug beneath her feet muffles the creaking floorboards.

This is WILLAMINA (18).

She edges the DOOR open -- it creaks with every inch.

She enters -- pulling the door closed behind her...

INT. TE AUTE COLLEGE - BEDROOM - CONTINUOUS

She stands inside this small, cosy space.

A small CANDLE rests atop a nearby SIDE TABLE.

In the SMALL BED next to it is a little BOY.

The COVERS are pulled up to his chin.

This is a YOUNG HAYTHAM (9).

Willamina places her SHOES on the ground.

She approaches the bed -- the boy merely watches her.

She pulls the covers back -- slips in next to the boy.

WILLAMINA

(whispers)

It's time for games, my little duck.

She climbs on top of him.

WILLAMINA (CONT'D)

(whispers)

Quack and suck. You have wonderful luck!

The boy is fearful -- squirms underneath her.

WILLAMINA (CONT'D)

(whispers)

Time for a brittle and spittle fuck.

The boy vainly turns away --

She brings her lips down on his.

MATCH CUT TO:

INT/EXT. HAYTHAM'S CARRIAGE (MOVING) - COASTAL ROAD - DAY (PRESENT)

HAYTHAM stares out of the CARRIAGE WINDOW --

A distant look in his eyes.

A steady stream of SMOKE slowly but surely fills the cabin...

... leading away from his CIGAR.

With his RIGHT HAND, he occasionally pulls it out of his mouth --

Lets the smoke escape and plume into the velvet headliner.

His LEFT HAND remains encased inside its GLOVE.

He continues staring out the window.

MEREANA is wrapped up in a FUR CLOAK.

She bats the smoke away.

But it's in vain.

She coughs.

MEREANA

Must you smoke the entire ride?

She waits for a response...

... but doesn't get one.

Haytham continues to stare out the window.

She looks to him, trying to catch his attention...

... He doesn't seem to notice.

She turns and looks out her own window.
 They remain in silence --
 Apart from the intermittent puffs of smoke.

EXT. COASTAL ROAD - LATER (SUNSET)

The CARRIAGE continues along the coastal dirt road.
 On the horizon -- the SUN sets -- bathing blood orange hues.

INT/EXT. HAYTHAM'S CARRIAGE (MOVING) - GISBORNE, GLADSTONE ST. - DAY

It's RAINING, terribly so.
 The CARRIAGE makes its way down the long, muddy street.
 HAYTHAM rubs his gloved left hand.
 Fidgeting, unsettled.
 Like an anxious boy.
 MEREANA clutches her thick MANUSCRIPT.
 Eyes her husband's odd behaviour.

MEREANA

Is it a bother? Your hand.

HAYTHAM

It's my wife playing author.

MEREANA

(earnest)

Please support me on this.

HAYTHAM

Use an alias, then, like Brontë.

MEREANA

(heated)

My work will bear my name.

HAYTHAM

Even if it means no one will ever read it?

She won't respond.
 Give in to his goading.
 They fall into silence.
 It's filled in by the outside world.

EXT. GLADSTONE ST. - CONTINUOUS

The carriage passes budding businesses and urbanisation...

... until it pulls over and stops.

HAYTHAM & MEREANA step out onto the FOOTPATH --

Under the protection of his UMBRELLA.

She is still holding the MANUSCRIPT.

They enter "LEE & LEE PUBLISHING".

INT. LEE & LEE PUBLISHING HOUSE - CONTINUOUS

HAYTHAM & MEREANA find themselves inside a suffocating space --

Surrounded by DRAB BROWNS and GREYS.

Closed WINDOWS.

IRON CHANDELIERS.

DUST in the air -- it flitters through the sunlight.

They look uncomfortable.

Another MAN, short and old, approaches them.

This is GEORGE LEE (50), the publisher.

He shakes the younger man's hand.

GEORGE

Haytham. Welcome, welcome. What can I do for you?

HAYTHAM

You can, George, give us your opinion on this.

Haytham gestures to the MANUSCRIPT in Mereana's hands.

HAYTHAM (CONT'D)

Written by (glances at Mereana) my wife.

MEREANA

I would like to know if it's fit for publishing, and therefore, fit for "Lee & Lee".

George eyes the manuscript -- eyes them.

GEORGE

I can certainly take a look. It's not your husband's biography, is it? Although the outrage would be disastrous, we'd make a fortune!

Haytham lets the insult slide.

HAYTHAM

(looks around)

Are things that bad? I hadn't noticed until now.

George cannot help but bristle.

MEREANA

If there are any similarities to my husband, I can assure you, Mr Lee, it is from the periphery. It is, however, something that needs careful consideration before judgement is made.

GEORGE

(biting)

I seldom need advice from a novice. And I currently have more on my plate than I would like.

George looks to Haytham for support.

HAYTHAM'S VOICE

(strong, distant echo)

Apologise.

A blankness fills George's eyes --
He rigidly complies.

GEORGE

(to Mereana)

Forgive me, Missus Halbert. As I said...
Full plate.

George rubs his temples -- like he has a headache.
Mereana glances at a nonchalant Haytham.
She notices the behaviour -- it's happened before.

The older man accepts the manuscript...

... and retreats from the couple without another word.
Most odd behaviour in Mereana's opinion.

EXT. STOUT ST. - MINUTES LATER

The CARRIAGE is parked on the side of a muddy street.

HAYTHAM & MEREANA stand under the covered PORCH --
Of a two storey VICTORIAN COTTAGE.
He wipes his muddy BOOTS on the MAT.
The DRIVER unloads their LUGGAGE from the roof rack.

MEREANA

I understood the Wyllie Cottage was sold to
Mr Dunlop.

HAYTHAM

It was. My aunt and her husband live in
Mangapapa. Dunlop still lets me use it when
I want, though.

MEREANA

That's generous of him.

HAYTHAM

You know how important Halberts are here.

He opens the DOOR -- she steps through.

INT. WYLLIE COTTAGE, 1ST FLOOR - CONTINUOUS

You can hear the rattling of the rain hitting the tin roof.

Inside this warm but intimate space --
Mereana looks around...

... Haytham watches her.
She fits in, effortlessly.

INT. WYLLIE COTTAGE, 1ST FLOOR - LIVING ROOM - CONTINUOUS

There is an OPEN FIREPLACE.

A ROCKING CHAIR and LEATHER SOFA.
Carved TABLE with KORU surrounding Celtic KNOTS.
BONE CHINA SET and BRASS BINOCULARS.
Framed PHOTOGRAPHS of a WOMAN in a VICTORIAN DRESS and KOROWAI.

Haytham moves UPSTAIRS -- she follows...

INT. WYLLIE COTTAGE, 2ND FLOOR - BEDROOM - CONTINUOUS

... and finds a single but LARGE BED.
There's a small BATHTUB and VANITY.
Along with the usual bedroom accoutrements.

Haytham looks out of the rain-smearred ROADSIDE WINDOW.

MEREANA

Our room? Very cosy.

He continues looking outside.

HAYTHAM

I have more business before tonight.

He finally looks at her -- a familiar grin.

HAYTHAM (CONT'D)

I know how important it is for women to get
ready. You'll be alright in my absence?

She hugs him.

Kisses him.

He reciprocates her tenderness.

MEREANA

Thank you.

HAYTHAM

I won't be long.

EXT. CARROLL HOME - MINUTES LATER

The constant RAIN pelts the impressive house.
A MAN climbs onto the VERANDA RAILING --
Peeking into the nearby WINDOWS --
Making sure he isn't caught.

It's HAYTHAM.

He pulls himself up and onto the ROOF.

Slinking across it, he stops by an ajar WINDOW --

Enough to let in fresh air.

Inside, he spies a heavily pregnant WOMAN lying on a large BED.

A greying MAN in a sharp MILITARY UNIFORM is by her side.

This is CAPTAIN JOHN CARROLL (45).

ANASTASIA spots Haytham -- hides her excitement.

She says something to her husband...

... he leaves the room.

The FRONT DOOR is heard opening and closing.

Haytham peeks over the edge --

Sees Captain Carroll entering his CARRIAGE.

Haytham pulls the window wider and slips in.

INT. CARROLL HOME, 2ND FLOOR - MASTER BEDROOM - MOMENTS LATER

The morose weather matches ANASTASIA'S mood --

Despite Haytham's company.

She looks out the WINDOWS --

Watches the raindrops pelt them.

Haytham's lying next to her, his right hand on her large stomach.

His familiar grin is less certain.

HAYTHAM

How long before you're both screaming?

She refocuses on him.

Her face softens, tension leaves.

ANASTASIA

Very soon... I hope.

HAYTHAM

And you're both alright?

She smiles warmly -- rubs his hand.

ANASTASIA

He's strong, just like you.

He smiles too.

HAYTHAM

I knew it.

ANASTASIA

It feels like a boy.

His smile vanishes.

HAYTHAM

Does he know?

She shakes her head.

HAYTHAM (CONT'D)

I want to be there.

ANASTASIA

But he'll--

HAYTHAM

(interrupts)

Send him to fetch your mother. I won't miss this.

They hold each other.

Enjoy the time together.

ANASTASIA

Did you hear about the party tonight?

HAYTHAM

Don't go.

ANASTASIA

Why? If you'll be there--

HAYTHAM

(interrupts)

That's why you won't be. Please.

She nods and relaxes into him.

QUICK FADE OUT & IN:

INT. TE AUTE COLLEGE - BEDROOM - LATE AFTERNOON (1878)

Standing in the middle of this familiar room --
Is a naked TEENAGE BOY --
His hands cover his crotch.
He obedient waits as a YOUNG WOMAN is reclined on his BED.
She is no longer in the monochrome uniform of a MAID.
Instead, she is draped in burgundy velvet.
This is WILLAMINA (24) & YOUNG HAYTHAM (15).

WILLAMINA

Don't hide from me.

Haytham hesitates...

... before moving his hands to his sides.
She glances -- smirks.

WILLAMINA

I'm coming next week.

HAYTHAM, AGE 15

You cannot.

WILLAMINA

Oh. Why?

HAYTHAM, AGE 15

My sister and father are visiting. I haven't
seen them since term started.

She's silent, pondering.

WILLAMINA

(finally)

A fine idea, little duck. I'll meet her.

HAYTHAM, AGE 15

No.

She rises off the bed.

He shrinks but remains rooted.

WILLAMINA

Yes.

She eyes him up and down.

WILLAMINA (CONT'D)

(purrs)

Come.

He hesitates...

... but follows her command.

EXT. TE AUTE COLLEGE - MORNING

YOUNG HAYTHAM, dressed in his sharp uniform --

Opens a CARRIAGE DOOR.

He helps GIRL out of it --

His hand is slapped away.

A MAN steps out of the bespoke cage.

This is HENARE (34) & KEITA HALBERT (10).

They are prim and proper in dress and image.

His father remains pale and hollow --

Like a walking, talking corpse.

No longer a full human.

HAYTHAM, AGE 15

[I'm pleased to see you, father.]

Henare passes him without a sparing glance...

... meets the HEADMASTER (early 50s) with a firm handshake.

They enter the MAIN BUILDING.

Keita springs to her brother --

He catches her in his arms.

She's overjoyed -- hugs him.

HAYTHAM, AGE 15

Keita, I almost fell over!

KEITA, AGE 10

But you did not.

He set her down.

HAYTHAM, AGE 15

Your English has improved.

KEITA, AGE 10

I have been practicing.

He takes her hand.

Happier without his father's presence circling him.

DISSOLVE TO:

INT. TE AUTE COLLEGE - HALLWAY - MINUTES LATER

HAYTHAM & KEITA make their way along the rug floor.
Hand-in-hand.

KEITA, AGE 10

But it is so nice outside. Why can we not
play out there?

HAYTHAM, AGE 15

(softly)
We will. Later.

KEITA, AGE 10

Do you promise?

HAYTHAM, AGE 15

I promise.

He slows them the closer they get to his CLOSED BEDROOM DOOR.

KEITA, AGE 10

Why are you stopping? Are you in pain?

HAYTHAM, AGE 15

No... You're right. Let's go outside.

She tugs him to his CLOSED DOOR.

KEITA, AGE 10

No, no, I want to see your room.

She turns the HANDLE --
Opens the DOOR --

INT. TE AUTE COLLEGE - BEDROOM - CONTINUOUS

The SIBLINGS enter --
Find WILLAMINA sitting on the BED.
Fully dressed.
Her legs are crossed.

WILLAMINA

Hello.

KEITA, AGE 10

Hi. Who are you?

WILLAMINA

A friend... I hope of yours.

KEITA, AGE 10

My name is Keita Halbert.

Willamina slips off the BED --
Crosses the room...

... and shakes Keita's hand.

WILLAMINA

Ahhh. Haytham's sister... Haytham, close the
door. I want to get to know your sister
while we play.

KEITA, AGE 10

I love games!

Haytham edges the DOOR shut --
His back to them, he's visibly pained.
Knows it's wrong...

... but follows her command.

QUICK FADE OUT & SMASH IN:

INT/EXT. CARRIAGE (MOVING) - GLADSTONE ST. - NIGHT (PRESENT)

The RAIN has gotten worse -- THUNDER roars in the distance.

The HALBERTS are sitting comfortably inside their velvet cage.

MEREANA is draped in an elegant shade of AUBERGINE.

By contrast, HAYTHAM is covered in BLACK -- neck-to-boot.

A familiar GLOVE covers his LEFT HAND.

It is holding the INVITATION.

MEREANA

Did you have to wear black? This is a party,
not a funeral.

HAYTHAM

(curt)

It could always become one.

She plucks the invite from his gloved hand.

It reads:

*"Join us as we celebrate
CAROLINE WILLIAMSON'S
34th birthday party.
Sunday
April 22
Masonic Hotel"*

The bottom of the page is torn off.

MEREANA

How do we know this "Missus Williamson"?

HAYTHAM

A friend.

He resumes staring out the carriage WINDOW.

Begins fidgeting again.

She notices before looking out her window.

Already has some idea of what "friend" means.

EXT. MASONIC HOTEL - MINUTES LATER

It continues to RAIN, and it won't let up any time soon.

A cold, cream cube of concrete sticks out of the muddy street.

White bricks accent at the corners in a Florentine style.

Iron railings form a perimeter around the WINDOWS.

The only balconies are above the entrance.

The CARRIAGE pulls up to the FRONT STEPS --
 Welcomed by SERVANTS and their UMBRELLAS.
 The HALBERTS make the short journey inside.

INT. MASONIC HOTEL, 1ST FLOOR - MAIN HALL - CONTINUOUS

A gathering of opulence -- excess -- false aristocracy.
 Everyone is held together by their expensive clothing --
 Makeup and elaborate hairstyles --
 Drink and drugs -- however out of view they try to keep it.
 Everyone is wearing SOFT AUTUMN TONES --
 Ranging from CREAM to MELLOW ROSE -- TEAL to OLD GOLD.
 HAYTHAM sticks out like Satan in a church.
 With MEREANA, though, they look regal.
 Like they own the place, and they know it.
 His appearance attracts immediate interest --
 Everyone nearby is surprised and excited.
 Hushed discussions break out around them.

WAITERS carrying TRAYS OF CHAMPAGNE FLUTES float around.
 ONE passes the HALBERTS --
 Haytham takes a FLUTE -- downs it -- replaces it -- grabs another.
 Mereana is confused by this.
 She doesn't say anything, not here at least.

HAYTHAM

Where may I find our host?

WAITER

She's upstairs, sir, on the balcony.

Haytham takes his wife's hand -- squeezes it.
 Almost painfully.
 He leads them through the crowds...

... until they are standing off to the side.
 Watching everyone before them.

HAYTHAM

Do you notice anything strange?

She quickly peers around -- not sure what she's looking for.
 MEN with WHITE GLOVES -- SERVANTS and STAFF --

The sparkling JEWELLERY around WOMEN'S necks --
MEN ignoring their WOMEN -- gazing at others --

MEREANA

No one is dancing.

HAYTHAM

(amused)

That too, I suppose, but I meant with your
fellow sex.

She examines the surrounding WOMEN --
They're all in similar, gorgeous GOWNS -- that can't be it...

... more than a little inebriated -- but so are the MEN...

... but unlike them, the WOMEN lack WEDDING RINGS.

MEREANA

None of them are married.

Haytham looks surprised -- quickly replaced with satisfaction.

HAYTHAM

You have a keen eye!

MEREANA

Two, on occasion. I've seen much with them
already... Why are we here?

He leads them away.

They pass a MAN -- very inebriated -- sloshing his drink about.
His DATE tries leading him away -- to no success.

MEREANA (CONT'D)

Haeata.

HAYTHAM

If I asked you to wait in the carriage, will
you?

MEREANA

If you tell me why.

He leads them towards the STAIRCASE.

The "PARTY" seems more like a drunken orgy.
Everyone is sloshing about, spilling liquid.
The clothes will be coming off any moment now.
It is not a glamorous sight.

HAYTHAM

Is this New England? Is that why they act
like it's the old one?

MEREANA

It's not so different than your tryst with
Ana. (shakes her head) Haeata, why did we
come here?

HAYTHAM

(rough)
Do as I say.

She eyes him, unwavering.
Haytham's fidgeting grows.
He rubs his gloved hand.

MEREANA

(finally)
While I wait, think of an adequate answer.

She turns and beelines for the EXIT --
Everyone parts for her.
He watches, to make sure...

... no one follows her.

A red-faced and pensive GEORGE LEE rushes towards him.
He's holding a familiar MANUSCRIPT in his hands.
He looks out of place here.

GEORGE

(stern)
Mr Halbert.

HAYTHAM

George. I figured this wouldn't be your kind
of party.

GEORGE

Mr Lee.

Haytham ignores him, enjoys his drink.

GEORGE (CONT'D)

I hope what I am holding is a juvenile prank
- a tasteless attempt at humour because if
it isn't, I will have you know I am not
impressed.

HAYTHAM

Is it not fit for "Lee & Lee Publishing"?

GEORGE

Not fit for the waste basket. I have never
encountered such vile, backwards material in
all my life.

HAYTHAM

Clearly, you've never walked around the
harbour.

George shoves the manuscript into Haytham's free hand --
And storms off to the EXIT.

Haytham sculls the rest of his drink --
Another Waiter passes by -- Haytham takes another GLASS.

He glances to the top of the STAIRCASE --
Sculls his drink.
Briefly hesitates...

... takes a step...

... then another and another --
And ascends...

INT. MASONIC HOTEL, 3RD FLOOR - CONTINUOUS

The MUSIC and CHATTER from below fades.

HAYTHAM finds himself -- as if against his own volition --
Coming to TRANSLUCENT, VEILED DOORS.
He opens them...

... and steps through...

INT/EXT. MASONIC HOTEL, 3RD FLOOR - BALCONY - CONTINUOUS

HAYTHAM is met by a WOMAN.
Her appearance stops him.
She's leaning against the RAILING.

The RAIN is incessant.
They're protected by the BALCONY ROOF.

She may be older, a little fuller --
But this is unmistakably WILLAMINA (34).

WILLAMINA

Little duck! You came. Alone?

HAYTHAM

Yes.

She approaches him, grinning in triumph.

WILLAMINA

(relieved)

Good.

She pulls out a small GLASS VIAL from her cleavage.
He can see a WHITE POWDER inside.
She unscrews the CAP.
Takes a couple of sniffs straight from the vial.
Enjoys the effect.

She looks him over.
Despite his height, he seems like a boy once more.

WILLAMINA

I was unsure you would.

HAYTHAM

You invited me, Willamina, so I came.

WILLAMINA

I saw a girl on your arm. Is she with you?

HAYTHAM

She's just a silly city girl.

She pulls him towards the railing.

Below, they see a CARRIAGE waiting outside the ENTRANCE.

HAYTHAM

I heard you were in Hawkes Bay.

WILLAMINA

Until recently. I've done well since I left you.

HAYTHAM

So have I.

She slaps him HARD.

He's shocked -- cups his reddening cheek.

He backs away.

WILLAMINA

I heard your bitch is ready to burst. I didn't think you had it in you.

Something boils deep within him.

Years in the making.

WILLAMINA (CONT'D)

I'll have to see if he's a man or like his father.

SUDDENLY --

He punches her -- square in the jaw --

She falls to the floor.

The MANUSCRIPT drops out of his gloved left hand.

He rushes on top of her --

His hands around her throat.

Squeezing tighter until his knuckles turn white --

Her neck is red --

Eyes pop blood vessels --

Groans and strangled cries --

Her hands claw at the air between them --

Nipping at his face --

He pulls her forward --

Then rips her back --

Her head smacks with a horrible crunch.
He does it again --
And again --
And again --
Until the only sound left is a wet slapping --
And the smattering of RAIN.

He rushes off her.
His hands are RED.
For a long time, he stays staring at it...

... until, as if awaking, he snaps to.
Picks up the MANUSCRIPT and flees.

The RAIN continues to fall.

INT. MASONIC HOTEL, 3RD FLOOR - BATHROOM - CONTINUOUS

HAYTHAM is at the BASIN.
The MANUSCRIPT lies on the floor.
Both taps are running.
He is trying to wash the blood off his hands.
Desperate.
It's harder than he thought.
He grows frantic, upset.
Until he's leaning over the sink.
Crying.
He falls to the floor.
Doesn't try to stop himself.
Once again, a scared schoolboy.
Allows himself to let it all out.

INT. MASONIC HOTEL, 3RD FLOOR - SAME

A WAITER steps off the STAIRCASE.
The same one that told Haytham where Missus Williamson was.
He carries a SMALL TRAY with a SINGLE CHAMPAGNE FLUTE atop it...

... nearing the partially open BALCONY DOORS.

INT. MASONIC HOTEL, 3RD FLOOR - BATHROOM - CONTINUOUS

A crashing sound shakes HAYTHAM from his reprieve.
Rushing footsteps make him bolt to his feet...

... until they begin to sound distant...

... and cease to be heard.

Unbeknownst to him, the Waiter has fled from the BALCONY.

INT. MASONIC HOTEL, 1ST FLOOR - MAIN HALL - SAME

The WAITER rushes down the STAIRCASE.

Clearly disturbed.

Tries not to let the guests notice.

He moves to the EXIT.

INT/EXT. CARRIAGE (STATIONARY) - MASONIC HOTEL - SAME

MEREANA is seated, growing impatient.

A feel of unease increases.

Something must have happened.

The feeling is confirmed when she sees a WAITER rush outside --

He's frantically talking to the welcoming SERVANTS.

Points up to the BALCONIES.

One servant runs inside.

The Waiter sprints down the street.

Mereana grips the DOOR HANDLE --

It's ripped open.

HAYTHAM hurries inside.

Pulls the door closed.

Tosses the MANUSCRIPT on the floor.

Bangs on the ceiling.

The CARRIAGE pulls away.

INT/EXT. CARRIAGE (MOVING) - GLADSTONE ST. - CONTINUOUS

The CARRIAGE rushes down the muddy street.

The wheels carve through large puddles.

Carriages slow to a crawl before corners or risk sliding.

The pelting rain ceases to stop --

Terrific rapping on the shops' tin roofs.

It's a black night.

MEREANA takes in her husband's state.

His eyes are puffy and red.

He's flushed.

Sweating.

Fidgeting.
Rubbing his gloved left hand.
Looking out the WINDOWS --
A POLICE WAGON whips past them.
Towards the HOTEL.
He looks away.
Breathes with relief.

MEREANA
(concerned)
Haeata.

He's unresponsive.
As if he genuinely didn't hear her.

Only now, she notices her returned MANUSCRIPT --
And the drying, brown-red smudges.
She picks it up.
Inspects it and her husband.
Can guess what happened, but not why nor to whom.
She chooses to stay quiet.

MATCH CUT TO:

INT. WYLLIE COTTAGE, 1ST FLOOR - LIVING ROOM - NIGHT

MEREANA & HAYTHAM are seated in uncomfortable silence --
On either end of the leather SOFA.
They've removed most of their partywear.
Not in foreplay but for simple comfort.
His GLOVE remains, though.

Her MANUSCRIPT lies atop the nearby CARVED TABLE.
She takes it.
Sees the dried, brown-red smudges.
He sees it too.
She holds her manuscript out to him.
He takes it, knowingly.

MEREANA
Tell me I'm wrong.

He prefers to let the question go unanswered.

MEREANA (CONT'D)

(insistent)

Tell me.

HAYTHAM

Do you want to be wrong?

She instantly stands -- moves to the nearby FIRE.
Gives them each room to breathe.
The flames dance and crackle.

He glances at the manuscript's cover --
It reads: "*Mysteria by Mereana Halbert*"
With the dried stains, he can't bear it for long.
He flips the cover over -- takes a PAGE from the stack.
Skimming over it...

... a look of concern soon spreads.
The page reads: "... *a man of strong will and stronger desires...*"

He takes another page.
It reads: "... *monsters of monstrous intent paled in comparison...*"

He grabs another.
It reads: "... *he slayed and laid with his own kin...*"

She hears the rustling.
Turns to him -- sees his franticness.
She's not surprised.

He takes another page.
It reads: "... *he journeyed up the walls he was birthed from...*"

And another.
It reads: "... *his end was swift...*"

He collects the MANUSCRIPT --

MEREANA

Haeata?

He passes her and is about to toss the stack of papers --

MEREANA (CONT'D)

No!

She grabs hold as he nears the FIRE.
Ripping them free, she protectively holds them close.
Backs away.
The flames lick at them both.

He towers over her -- like a standing bear.

HAYTHAM

Was he a fantasy or a confession?

MEREANA

He's a character, Haeata.

HAYTHAM

Did you consider how it would reflect upon
me? Upon us?

She doesn't back down.

MEREANA

It's only a story.

He avoids her -- she can sense something he won't admit.
She moves towards him -- makes him look her in the eye.

They stay in a tense standoff.
Neither submitting...

... until he finally breaks --
Slumps onto the sofa.
Exhausted.
Rubs his temples.

She doesn't move -- the silence seems to stretch on for minutes.

MEREANA

Tell me.

He gives her a pointed look -- one of rising anger.
In response, she sets her manuscript down out of his reach --
And sits down on the sofa.

MEREANA (CONT'D)

(gently)

You'll feel better.

He looks away -- a familiar distance enters his eyes.
She shifts down the sofa, settling next to him.
A comforting presence.
He hesitates, uncertain.

HAYTHAM

(finally)

A maid at boarding school... Willamina...
she took care of me. I was nine. When I
tried to-- (breathing hitches) She stuck my
hand in the fire and said, "The beautiful
Lucifer was burned. Now, no one believes the
Devil." I wanted to go home... so I burnt
the school down.

Tears wet his cheeks -- he swipes them away.
She caresses his arm, his shoulder, his face -- delicately.

HAYTHAM (CONT'D)

They put it out. I didn't go home. And she
was still there... My mother believed I was
gifted, but this was beyond parental pride.
I could guide a person's thoughts, make them
do what I wanted. The weaker the will, the
easier it was... but I couldn't stop her.

He finally looks to her -- she's gone from empathy to concern.
She takes his left hand -- entwines their fingers.
They merely sit there, in the flickering light.
Nothing else needs to be said.

QUICK FADE OUT & IN:

MONTAGE - HAYTHAM'S DREAM

A series of slow, molasses-like images.
"Frozen" memories -- as if they're suspended in time.

- (POV) The LIGHTHOUSE'S RED DOOR opens on its own.

- (POV) Inside, at the foot of the STAIRCASE --

The CONCRETE FLOOR is broken and dug out.

- (POV) With BLOODIED HANDS --
We place something wrapped in BLACK SILK into the hole.

- A younger HAYTHAM (20) sits on the edge of OTIKI HILL.
He's looking out to the WHANGAOKENO.
A distant look in his EYES.
His HANDS and CLOTHES are covered in BLOOD.

- Younger Haytham bathes in the OCEAN.
Washes the blood from his hands and clothes.
In the sky, he sees the KĀHU circling the LIGHTHOUSE --

- KEITA jumps from OTIKI HILL and into the crashing wave below.
Haytham watches, helpless --

- (POV) A BLACK VEIL slips over our eyes --

END MONTAGE

QUICK SMASH OUT & IN:

INT. CARROLL HOME, 2ND FLOOR - MASTER BEDROOM - MORNING

Outside the WINDOWS, it's RAINING once more.

ANASTASIA lies in a LARGE BED.
She's flushed.
Her hair is matted.
A sleeping INFANT in her arms.
HAYTHAM lies beside her.
He's happier than ever before.

HAYTHAM

(gently)
What shall we call him?

ANASTASIA

(gently)
Alexander... I dreamt of you. Of this.

HAYTHAM

Are you dreaming now?

ANASTASIA

If I woke and you weren't here...

HAYTHAM

You know my feelings for theatrics.

ANASTASIA

You know my feelings for you.

He kisses her...

... slips his SON into his arms.
He rises from the bed.

ANASTASIA

What are you doing?

HAYTHAM

Shhh. Tell him you lost the baby. He'll understand.

ANASTASIA

What...?

HAYTHAM

I'll send for you. Soon. I promise.

ANASTASIA

Haytham, please don't--

He leaves the room.
She's left stunned.

EXT. CARROLL HOME - CONTINUOUS

HAYTHAM exits the impressive house.
He shields his SON from the RAIN --
A piercing SCREAM from inside is heard.
It stops him in his track.
He knows what he's doing isn't right.

He buries the feeling.
And enters his CARRIAGE.

EXT. GISBORNE, HARBOUR - LATE MORNING

The RAIN is persistent and unending.

MEREANA's under an UMBRELLA, waiting beside a 20 TON SCHOONER --
It's christened "KAIKIRI".

HAYTHAM arrives.

Holding an UMBRELLA in one hand --

And something under his THICK CLOAK in the other.

He immediately climbs aboard, motions for her to follow.

INT/EXT. SCHOONER (STATIONARY) - CAPTAIN'S QUARTERS - CONTINUOUS

HAYTHAM dumps his wet UMBRELLA on the floor.

Shakes off his cloak and residual rain.

MEREANA sees a blanket bundled close to his chest.

He reveals his most prized possession: a SON.

HAYTHAM

Isn't he perfect?

She seems rather rigid -- awkward.

HAYTHAM (CONT'D)

(softly)

If you have something to say, say it.

MEREANA

Did Ana...?

HAYTHAM

She'll live.

He hands the boy to her.

She remains rigid, not sure of what to do.

MEREANA

He should be with his mother.

HAYTHAM

That's you.

She turns to look at him directly.

MEREANA

What's his name?

HAYTHAM

Alexander. But he'll need one for back home,
so... Tuhorouta. Mm. Good, strong name.

The baby stirs -- makes noises.
She moves about the room.

HAYTHAM (CONT'D)

Don't hate me, Hina.

Before she can retort --
He's slipped out.
Leaving her with the baby.

LONG DISSOLVE TO:

EXT. SCHOONER (MOVING) - OCEAN - LATER (AFTERNOON)

The weather has cleared.
The SUN is out.
It's created a thick humidity aboard the drying ship.

The small CREW of 6 tend to the SAILS and LANYARDS.

HAYTHAM is at the helm, the BABY in his arms.
He looks comfortable, stripped out of his thicker garments.
He's lazily steering the WHEEL.

HAYTHAM

(to Tuhorouta)

[Your father loves you very much.]

MEREANA stands at the PORTSIDE STERN.
The water is calm.
The sky is clear.

A faint SINGING is carried on the wind.
Something only Haytham seems to hear.
A familiar song: "Waiata a Hinewahirangi".

KAIKIRI'S VOICE

(singing)

*Tera ia nga pukitanga Tipare o Niu, e;
 Ko te ara tonu ia whanatu ai koe ra;
 Maku nei e riringi ki te wai roimata, na!
 Te kotonga nei mana hau e whiu, e,
 Noho ana hoki au te motu a Kaiawa, e,
 Te Kura a Tarawhata e kore nei e taea, na!
 Te ata kitea atu e au te pae ki te whenua,
 e,
 I te wai o te kamo ka utuhia ki waho, e,
 I te mata i ahau i te po roa nei, e,
 I te kore rawa ra kihai rawa i whairo, e,
 Nga rakau o te hore kia mowai ana, na!*

He lets the words wash over him.
 His grip on the WHEEL tightens.

Mereana sees Haytham's sudden vacantness --
 Crosses the deck to him.

MEREANA

What's the matter?

HAYTHAM

(lies)

Nothing.

He hands her the Baby.
 She still looks uncertain of what to do.
 The baby in her arms is a source of conflict.
 He is innocent, and yet, his existence mocks her inadequacy.
 She's unsure if she should love or despise him.

EXT. RANGIATA, BEACH - EVENING

Out in the ocean is an anchored SCHOONER.
 Past the ship, WHANGAOKENO can be seen.

A small ROWBOAT approaches the shore.

HAYTHAM jumps out before it finally hits the wet sand.
 He helps MEREANA out.
 She's cradling his SON.

The CREW unloads the luggage from the rowboat.

HAYTHAM & MEREANA begin the trek back to THE MANOR.
Above, high in the sky, the KĀHU circles them.

EXT. THE MANOR - MINUTES LATER

The HALBERTS pass through the open GATE --
A HORSE is hitched to the FENCE.
They cross the GRASS COURT.
Standing on the PORCH are KŌKĀ & JAMES.
TURĪRĪ inspects the withered ROSE BEDS.
The man's presence isn't a welcome surprise --
Especially for Mereana, who grows uncomfortable.
Kōkā descends the STEPS to greet her great-grandson.
Mereana is more than happy to give her the infant.
Turīrī remains where he was.
Haytham takes Kōkā's place beside James.

JAMES

Adorable. Is it yours?

HAYTHAM

(to Kōkā)

[Why is he here?]

James removes a piece of paper from his jacket.
He hands it to his cousin.
Haytham unfolds it --
And any hint of petty annoyance vanishes from him.
It reads: "*Deed of Land Transfer*"

KŌKĀ

[He said we're no longer welcome.]

JAMES

(sincere)

A summons was delivered, but I had no idea
you had already left. Absence is not an
adequate defence, but don't worry, you'll
have no trouble relocating--

SUDDENLY --

Haytham grips James by his jacket --
Roughly backs him into the wall --
A violent thump.
James struggles to wrestle himself free.

Mereana rushes to her husband's side --
Tries to pull him off.

Turīrī can only watch the violence unfold.
He cannot move or look away.
Kōkā hobbles towards him --
To let him know he's safe.
The baby in her hold cries.

KŌKĀ
[Haeata! It's done.]

Haytham releases James --
Who tries, in vain, to smooth out his wrinkled jacket.
Mereana pulls her husband away to the other end of the PORCH.

JAMES
Yes, it is.

Haytham's seething --
Barely restrained by his wife.

James descends the STEPS.
Passes Turīrī & Kōkā.
Mounts his horse and departs --
As the Crew bring up the LUGGAGE.

Haytham barely simmers down.
Enters his "home".

EXT. THE MANOR, 1ST FLOOR - STUDY - LATER (NIGHT)

HAYTHAM is seated at his large DESK.
Smoking and drinking.
Enjoying the quiet...

... which is broken when the DOOR is opened --
And MEREANA enters, closing the door behind her.
She doesn't move from that spot.
They simply eye each other --
From the ends of the smoky and pungent smelling room.

MEREANA
What are we going to do?

HAYTHAM

It's my business.

She slowly makes her way towards him.

MEREANA

He's your cousin, isn't he?

He instead blows a big puff of smoke at her.

MEREANA (CONT'D)

You're right. Family wouldn't do that to one another.

She leans over the desk --

Takes the drink from his hand.

Sculls it.

He eyes her, confused by the action.

MEREANA (CONT'D)

We're family, so I must be honest. Like you were.

She pours more of the brown liquid into the glass.

MEREANA (CONT'D)

About James.

She pushes the glass towards him.

MEREANA (CONT'D)

And about myself.

His eyes never waver.

His mind is already assuming the words to come.

The more concrete the thought, the darker he becomes.

EXT. TE ARAROA, BRISTOW HOME - EARLY MORNING

HAYTHAM knocks on the DOOR...

... no response.

He knocks again, harder...

... the DOOR opens.
He's met by JAMES, who's not pleased to see him.

EXT. TE ARAROA, BEACH - MOMENTS LATER

Across the road from his home --
JAMES & HAYTHAM stand on the shore, looking out to the calm waters.
There is a stiffness between them.

The sun is rising into a captivating sky of blues and pinks --
Creamy clouds soak in the hues, tinting to violets and lavender --
Almost like a painting with its stillness.

HAYTHAM

I want to apologise for my behaviour.

JAMES

You accept it, then?

HAYTHAM

I must set a good example for my sons.

JAMES

Congratulations.

The two men are unusually subdued, but sincere.

HAYTHAM

Is there nothing I can do to change your
mind?

JAMES

I've seen how persuasive you can be, but no.

HAYTHAM

Pity.

Haytham looks defeated.
He's slouching, something he never does.

HAYTHAM (CONT'D)

You'll take care of it, won't you?

JAMES

Haytham, I love Rangiaata, but I cannot trust
its safe with you.

HAYTHAM

I understand.

JAMES

My fondest memories are when we were all
children, running around, treated like
princes... I miss those days. I miss growing
up with you and Keita. I miss growing up
with all my cousins.

Overcome, the men pull each other in close.
They hongi and hug.
Genuinely.
It has been years since they've done it like this.

Haytham stands tall once more.
Holds James close to him.

HAYTHAM

[You were afraid of me as a boy. You still
are.]

James grows tense in their embrace.

HAYTHAM (CONT'D)

[Hina told me everything.]

James tries to pull himself free.

JAMES

Haeata--

Haytham doesn't let him go --
But pulls back so they're face-to-face.

HAYTHAM'S VOICE

(gentle, distant echo)
Hear me.

A blankness fills James' eyes --
He rigidly complies...

... remaining fixed on Haytham.

HAYTHAM'S VOICE (CONT'D)

(distant echo)

Don't breathe.

SUDDENLY --

James gasps and struggles -- staring at Haytham, bewildered.

Haytham holds him in place.

James writhes, clawing at his own throat as he chokes --

Until finally suffocates to death --

He slumps forward --

As if they're hugging again.

Haytham lies him down on the SHORE.

He remains staring at the lifeless corpse --

As if in a trance.

The silence is thick and heavy.

Haytham finally departs, leaving the body to be discovered.

EXT. RANGITUKIA, MONUMENT PADDOCK - LATER (SUNSET)

HAYTHAM leads TURĪRĪ down a grassy, sprawling paddock.

MEREANA holds TUHOROUTA in her arms -- they aren't far behind.

Their CARRIAGE is parked by the DIRT ROAD.

The HALBERTS come to a small white picket fence.

It's short enough to step over it.

Inside its pen is a STONE SLAB.

Erected in the middle is shaft of MARBLE.

An angelic woman presides atop it.

TURĪRĪ

What is this, Uncle?

HAYTHAM

My grandfather's monument. The inscription says he showed unswerving loyalty to the Queen. He was loyal to his people.

TURĪRĪ

Father said they called him "Kūpapa".

HAYTHAM

It's nothing to trouble yourself with.

Haytham takes Tuhorouta from Mereana's arms.

HAYTHAM

(to Mereana)

It's done.

He moves back to Turīri, leading him past the monument --
Just outside the fence.
Leaving behind his wife to be with his sons.
They see flat land --
Hills in the distance --
With the WAIAPU RIVER in between them.

HAYTHAM

[One day, this will be yours to protect.]

Turīri looks at his uncle with reverence.
It sours when he looks upon his "brother".

INT. THE MANOR, 2ND FLOOR - GUEST ROOM - LATER (NIGHT)

It has been converted into a makeshift NURSERY.
All that is different is the WAHAKURA --
A woven HARAKEKE BASSINET atop the BED.
MEREANA stands beside it, looking at the baby lying in it.

MEREANA

[You're a punishment. For my sins. And for
what I made your father do.]

TUHOROUTA'S POV - WAHAKURA

MEREANA looks down at us.
We can almost feel her disdain.

MEREANA

[I wish to tell you something, something
I've not shared with anyone else... Why did
Haeata want me? The women he's chased, or
been chased by, are all fair and foreign in

some way. I'm not worldly, or experienced,
or exotic... Perhaps that is the reason.]

She fights back her tears -- won't let them break.
She leans against the railing.
An act to get closer to us, but also for support.
Something to grip.

MEREANA (CONT'D)

(confessional)

[Your father has betrayed me-- Betrays me.
Regularly. And I'm sure without end. He was
fed from birth that he exists outside of
moral judgement, outside of right and wrong.
He is what everyone accuses him of being.
But so what? There are worse men than him,
and worser still that are called "Saints".
For all he is, I still...]

She sinks her head into her hands.
Backs away from us -- and out of view.

The space is deathly silent...

... broken only by distant, soft whimpering.
Filled by our own, louder crying.

BACK TO SCENE:

Merana wipes her tears away -- returns to the wahakura.
She picks up the crying infant.
Tries to soothe him.
Finds she's doing a better job than before.

TURĪRĪ watches from the DOORWAY.
He heard everything.

QUICK FADE OUT & IN:

EXT. URUPA - NOON

The half-empty GLASS BOTTLE sits atop the FENCE POST.

KŌKĀ sits on a BENCH.
She cradles the BABY in her arms.

MEREANA stands at the foot of a particular GRAVE.
The HEADSTONE reads:

Keita Halbert
1868 - 1883
"Sorrow of yore, forever in life."

MEREANA

[What happened?]

Kōkā remains ignorant.

MEREANA (CONT'D)

[Please. How did she die?]

Kōkā points her CARVED CANE towards the LIGHTHOUSE.
The KĀHU is circling it.

Mereana pours water from the GLASS BOTTLE -- washes her hands.
Exits through the small GATE.

EXT. OTIKI HILL, TRACK - MINUTES LATER

MEREANA follows the path as it winds and snakes up.
Looking up, she sees the KĀHU...

... almost like it's leading her along.

EXT. URUPA - SAME

HAYTHAM slowly approaches the BENCH.
KŌKĀ remains where she was -- the BABY still in her arms.
He sits next to her.

KŌKĀ

[What is it, my boy?]

He seems serious and sincere, devoid of mirth and smirk.
He hesitates, as if not wanting to speak the words.

HAYTHAM

(finally)

[My wife cannot conceive, and not for lack
of trying, either.]

KŌKĀ

[Can you think of why that may be?]

He looks downcast, ashamed to admit.

HAYTHAM

[Maybe she's not fit to have children.]

KŌKĀ

[Only a tohunga can remedy that.]

He gives her a cold, hard look.

KŌKĀ (CONT'D)

[You... are what you are. There's no
changing that.]

HAYTHAM

[If that's true then no what matter I do, it
shouldn't feel wrong. And if it's a choice,
then I shouldn't have to question myself.]

KŌKĀ

[Because of foolishness, or your own pride?]

HAYTHAM

[Is my pride not justified? You taught me
that.]

She's saddened -- as if accepting something deep within herself.

KŌKĀ

[Times have changed.]

He looks out across the land...

... sees in the distance...

... the KĀHU flying above LIGHTHOUSE.

EXT. OTIKI HILL, SUMMIT - MINUTES LATER

MEREANA stands in front of the LIGHTHOUSE'S RED DOOR.
She opens it and enters...

INT. LIGHTHOUSE - CONTINUOUS

MEREANA finds the FLOOR covered with loose WOODEN BOARDS.
 She crosses them to the SPIRAL STAIRCASE --
 The FLOORBOARDS bounce and shake --
 As if they're being banged on from underneath.
 A seemingly unnatural event --
 It's simply because the boards are weak and rotting.

She steps off the STAIRCASE and pries the boards up --
 Finds a PIT in the CRACKED STONE FLOOR underneath --
 And something in it, wrapped in BLACK SILK.

She reaches out and unwraps the shawl...

... and finds an INFANT'S SKELETON inside --
 She screams at the sight --
 And quickly backs away...

... bumping into something blocking the DOORWAY --
 THE VEILED WOMAN.
 A BLACK VEIL over Mereana's face --

QUICK SMASH OUT & FADE IN:

EXT. OTIKI HILL, SUMMIT - MINUTES LATER

MEREANA lies on the ground.
 Motionless.

HAYTHAM rushes up the hill -- and to her side.
 Finds his wife's clothes are ripped to shreds.
 Scratches all over her skin.
 He sees the open RED DOOR.

INT. LIGHTHOUSE - CONTINUOUS

To HAYTHAM'S horror --
 His shameful secret has been unearthed.
 He wraps the SKELETON back up.

EXT. OTIKI HILL, SUMMIT - MINUTES LATER

HAYTHAM lifts Mereana into his arms, he quickly departs.

DISSOLVE TO:

INT. THE MANOR, 2ND FLOOR - MASTER BEDROOM - NIGHT

A single CANDLE rests on a nearby BEDSIDE DRAWER.
It flickers and barely lights the room.

MEREANA startles awake --
Finds she is in a familiar, FOUR-POSTER BED.
Her EYES scan -- every wall and shadowed corner.
Her tattered CLOTHES rest on the nearby VANITY.
Her breathing hitches -- and quickens unevenly, rapidly.
She scrambles out of the BED --
Discovers she's wearing a WHITE NIGHTGOWN.

HAYTHAM enters -- carrying a TRAY of cloth and a bowl of water.

MEREANA backs away -- hitting the wall.

MEREANA
(panicking)
Stay away from me!

He places the tray down on a nearby DRAWER.
He approaches her calmly, gently holding his hands up.

HAYTHAM
(soothing)
It's alright. You're alright.

She finally recognises her husband --
Runs to him in fear.
He wraps her tightly in his arms.
She cries with abandon.

He leads them to the bed.
Sits them both on the edge.

HAYTHAM
Hina?

She's too frightened to respond.
He tries to loosen her grip on him.
She won't budge.

HAYTHAM

Hina, I'm not going anywhere.

She reluctantly lets him go.

He retrieves the TRAY.

And begins wiping her face.

She enjoys the cool of the damp cloth.

HAYTHAM

You know--

MEREANA

(interrupts)

Another secret.

He rinses the cloth.

HAYTHAM

Some should remain so.

MEREANA

Look at me.

He follows her command.

She only now notices the WAHAKURA has been moved into this room --

Positioned between the PILLOWS of the BED.

The BABY is sleeping inside it.

MEREANA (CONT'D)

We must leave.

HAYTHAM

This is our home.

MEREANA

And it's tried to kill us! Who's next? Your
sons? Kōkā?

HAYTHAM

You want to know everything? Stay. Don't
leave.

Having issued his offer, he waits for her response.

She hasn't left, but she too, is silent.

QUICK FADE OUT & IN:

EXT. THE MANOR - EARLY MORNING

KŌKĀ exits through the FRONT DOOR.
Her CARVED CANE taps atop the PORCH.

A trail of SCRUNCHED PAPER leads her to HAYTHAM --
Who's sitting on the PORCH RAILING.
He scrunches another into a ball and tosses it --
Replaces it with a fresh page and begins writing on it.

KŌKĀ

[Haeata, we're out of meat. Take your
grandfather's rifle and head into the bush.]

He looks at her.

HAYTHAM

[Where's Turīrī? I'll take him with me.]

KŌKĀ

[He's with his sisters.]

He nods, pushing his latest attempt to the side.

HAYTHAM

[If I'm not back by dusk, I'll stay in the
cabin.]

KŌKĀ

[Take your time.]

He watches her hobble away, curious.

INT. THE MANOR, 1ST FLOOR - KITCHEN - MINUTES LATER

MEREANA peers through the WINDOWS while holding the BABY.
Her scratches have almost healed.
Only faint traces can be glimpsed and only up close.
No lasting damage on the surface.

She sees HAYTHAM cross the BACKYARD --
RIFLE in hand...

... disappearing into the thick BUSH.

KŌKĀ (O.S)

[If you're ready, we go now.]

MEREANA

[I'm ready.]

Mereana follows KŌKĀ out of THE MANOR.

LONG DISSOLVE TO:

INT. TOHUNGA'S HOUSE - LATER (MORNING)

Seated around a small TABLE is MEREANA, who's holding the BABY -- KŌKĀ and an OLD MAN.

This is the TOHUNGA (late 60s).

TOHUNGA

(gently)

[Where is your matakite husband?]

MEREANA

[He doesn't know I'm here. He wouldn't approve.]

TOHUNGA

[Such beliefs are becoming more common now. I suspect they are not yours. How may I help you?]

Mereana looks to Kōkā -- receives an encouraging nod...

... she looks back to the patient Tohunga.

MEREANA

[A child.]

He looks to the baby in her arms.

MEREANA (CONT'D)

[Of my own.]

He crosses the room to a DRAWER --
Retrieves a LEAF and sharp-edged STONE FLAKE...

... returns to his CHAIR.

TOHUNGA

[What is the desired sex?]

MEREANA

[Female.]

Placing the LEAF onto the TABLE --
He cuts into it the outline of a human figure...

... complete with EYES --
NOSE --
MOUTH --
And GENITALIA.

TOHUNGA

[We must retire to the next room, Mereana.
Kōkā, you do not mind waiting here with your
mokopuna?]

Kōkā gives Mereana a look of encouragement --
She hands the baby to the older woman.
The Tohunga leads Mereana out of the quiet room...

INT. TOHUNGA'S HOUSE - RITUAL ROOM - MINTUES LATER

In this small, silent space --
MEREANA is wrapped in a KOROWAI, watching as --
The TOHUNGA lays a MAT on the FLOOR...

... and motions for her to lay down on it.

He proceeds to recite --
To absolve her of any wrong acts or indiscretions in her past.
This act of WHAKAHORO -- free from TAPU --
Leaves her in a state of purity.

The Tohunga takes the LEAF in his hands.

TOHUNGA

"Kia homai te mana o Hine-ahu-one, kia
tamatane, kia tama-wahine ranei."

He draws open Mereana's cloak -- her bare body underneath it --
 He stands at her feet --
 And holds the LEAF in his LEFT HAND.

TOHUNGA (CONT'D)

"Tenei hine ka tu, he tauira nau, e Io... e!
 To manawa ko te manawa o Hine-ahu-one. Tenei
 ka tau."

He lays the LEAF -- face-marked side downward --
 The HEAD of the FIGURE toward MEREANA'S HEAD --
 And placed below her breastbone.
 He draws the cloak back, covering her.

TOHUNGA (CONT'D)

"Tenei hine ka tu, he tauira nau, e Io... e!
 To manawa ko te manawa o Hine-ahu-one. Tenei
 ka tau."

QUICK FADE OUT & IN:

INT. BUSH, HAYTHAM'S CABIN - NIGHT

A lit GASLAMP sits atop a small DESK --
 Illuminating the LETTER beneath it that HAYTHAM is writing.

HAYTHAM (V.O)

"Ana, I put these thoughts to paper as I do
 not have the courage to say them out loud.
 Taking a son from his mother is something I
 cannot ask forgiveness for. You will never
 forgive, nor forget. But he is my son. He is
 safest with me, not with your husband, who
 would have learnt in time the child was not
 his. I know our son misses you. Please come.
 I promise, if that means anything, that you
 will never be kept apart. Whatever you may
 think of me now, I hold fond memories and
 fonder feelings for you. Yours, Haytham."

He sets the PEN down --
 And hears RUSTLING outside...

... he glances at his RIFLE --
 Instead, picks up a SKINNING KNIFE.

The rustling grows quiet...

... the DOOR HANDLE turns, squeaking --
The DOOR opens --
He sees a WOMAN hidden under a FUR CLOAK.

HAYTHAM

Is something wrong, my dear?

The WOMAN pulls the hood off --
Revealing MEREANA.
He replaces the KNIFE.

HAYTHAM (CONT'D)

Hina?

She closes the DOOR -- slips the CLOAK off --
Wearing only a PIUPIU underneath.
She lays down on the small BED.
Like *Yuki Kihara's "Fa'afafine: In the Manner of a Woman"*.
He stares, captivated...

... and joins her.

QUICK FADE OUT & IN:

LATER:

Mereana, bare but happy, lays atop the BED.
Like *Francisco de Goya's "La Maja desnuda"*.
Haytham, equally bare, leans against the wall beside her.
His GLOVE remains on.
The GASLAMP bathes them in a soft, warm glow --
While they feed each other berries.

HAYTHAM

The piupiu was a little theatrical. You know
my feelings about that.

MEREANA

I didn't hear any complaints.

He looks at her for a long time.
Something has changed with her.

HAYTHAM

You're no longer the girl I brought home.

MEREANA

I knew who you were when we were betrothed.
I knew what you'd be like--

He opens his mouth, ready to retort--
She holds up a hand, silencing him.

MEREANA (CONT'D)

Nevertheless, you hurt me. Shamed me. I
cannot forgive you for that.

He nods in resignation.

HAYTHAM

I understand.

MEREANA

I don't think you do.

HAYTHAM

What would you ask of me, then: A divorce,
and to return to the city?

MEREANA

No. You will spend the rest of your days
with me, trying to understand.

He looks at her with a familiar distance.

HAYTHAM

Why didn't you object to the marriage?

She avoids his gaze.
A small smile appears, as if only for herself.

DISSOLVE TO:

EXT. GISBORNE, BOTANICAL GARDENS - DAY (FLASHBACK)

A soothing day.
The river is calm.

The sky is clear.
 HAYTHAM & MEREANA are seated under the cover of the GAZEBO.
 Nearby, they are watched by her mother, UMUTAHI (early 40s) --
 As well as aunts and nieces.

Haytham holds out a balled-up WHITE SILK HANDKERCHIEF to her.
 She looks at it sceptically.
 He unfurls it...

... to reveal a small bundle of ruby-ripe STRAWBERRIES.
 The ends have already been cut off.
 The juices stain the cloth.

He holds one up to her closed mouth.
 Knowingly, she opens up.
 He pops the berry in.
 She eats it with glee.
 He hands the bundle to her.
 Quickly glancing to her mother, she puts a berry in his mouth --
 He teasingly nips her fingers.
 She laughs before stopping herself -- looks to her chaperones.
 Turning back to him, she smiles.
 They continue to feed each other.

DISSOLVE TO:

INT. BUSH, HAYTHAM'S CABIN - NIGHT (PRESENT)

HAYTHAM now sits on the edge of the BED.
 His back is to MEREANA.

HAYTHAM

Why are you staying?

MEREANA

I'm your wife... Why do you betray me?

HAYTHAM

[She broke something. It couldn't be
 fixed... She's dead and I feel no
 different.]

She holds his left hand.
 Removes the GLOVE.
 He looks from her to his scarred limb.

He searches her face -- judging her sincerity.

MEREANA

[You've wanted a child? I will give you another.]

HAYTHAM

[What can I do?]

MEREANA

[Be mine. Only mine.]

He kisses her, she kisses back.

DISSOLVE TO:

EXT. BUSH - MORNING

HAYTHAM & MEREANA walk along the damp ground.
RIFLE slung across his shoulder.
Hand-in-hand -- holding his kills.
They look content.

He's repaired one damaged relationship.

FADE OUT.

OVER BLACK:

The sound of an earthly thwack...

... again and again --

SMASH IN:

EXT. URUPA - LATE MORNING

A SHOVEL pierces the ground.

Haytham stands at the foot of an OPEN GRAVE --
Obscuring the HEADSTONE.
A pile of DIRT rests next to him.

The KĀHU circles him in the sky.

EXT. FRONT PADDOCK - SAME

Just outside the URUPA is TURĪRĪ.
 The boy is fascinated by the wild flora.
 Standing in front of a nearby KĀNUKA TREE --
 He watches bees swarm the WHITE FLOWERS.
 Noticing a bundle free of the insects --
 He plucks off one of the flowers.

He backs away and turns towards the URUPA.

SUDDENLY --

Black-purple TUTU BERRIES fall to the ground before him.

He looks up...

... no one.
 He looks around...

... no TUTU TREE.
 He picks them up and eats them.

EXT. URUPA - SAME

Haytham carries something wrapped in a BLACK SILK SCARF.
 He peels it off...

... and holds up the INFANT SKELETON.
 He climbs down into the grave...

... and wrestles the COFFIN LID open --
 Inside is a decomposed BODY in a tattered BLACK DRESS.
 The HEADSTONE reads:

Keita Halbert
1868 - 1883
"Sorrow of yore, forever in life."

All the pain floods back in as Haytham holds his STILLBORN...

... he wraps the SILK SCARF around his child...

... and places him into the COFFIN with his MOTHER...

... closes the lid --

With overwhelming relief.

QUICK DISSOLVE TO:

MINUTES LATER:

Haytham smooths the last of the DIRT atop the now-covered GRAVE.
He feels lighter.
At peace.

SUDDENLY --
The KĀHU screeches.
Haytham looks up at it --
Then around...

... no one.
He strides to the nearest side of the FENCE...

... no one.
The panic starts as he whips around the area --
The GATE is open.
He sprints out of it --

EXT. FRONT PADDOCK - CONTINUOUS

Halfway down the PADDOCK, Haytham sees --
Turīri stumbling around as if he's drunk.

HAYTHAM

[Turīri!]

The boy doesn't respond.
It doesn't seem like he heard his "father" either.
Haytham chases after him --
Quickly catching the boy as he falls face first.
He turns Turīri over --
And sees his "son's" PURPLE LIPS --
The tell-tale sign of TUTU POISONING.
He holds the boy close to him.
Panic overtakes his thoughts.

SUDDENLY --
VOICES echo on the wind, as if from a distant past.
Haytham "sees" a MAN carrying a BOY with the same affliction.
He immediately knows who they are.

This is HENARE HALBERT (28) and a YOUNG HAEATA (9).

Haytham swiftly scoops up Turīrī and follows the memory.

EXT. THE MANOR - SAME

KŌKĀ sits in a chair on the PORCH.

A hapū MEREANA exits the house.

MEREANA

[He's asleep now.]

Mereana takes a seat -- relishes a moments rest.

SUDDENLY --

They witness HAYTHAM running down the PADDOCK...

... towards the DUNES with TURĪRĪ in his arms.

The older woman recognises the repeating events.

KŌKĀ

[Mere, come with me!]

They descend the STEPS and down the PADDOCK --

EXT. BEACH - MINUTES LATER

HAYTHAM races down the SHORE, carrying TURĪRĪ.

He "sees" his FATHER standing in the OCEAN.

His younger self is being held in the cold water.

Haytham follows.

Amongst the swelling WAVES --

Haytham bathes an unresponsive Turīrī.

The cold-water jolts the boy awake...

HAYTHAM

[Stay with me. I'm here.]

... but he's weak and passes out again.

Fear creeps in again as Haytham looks to his father.

Henare "appears" calm even as the young Haeata is also unconscious.

In truth, the man is equally afraid.

Hearing VOICES, Haytham looks back to the SHORE --
 And "sees" KŌKĀ and a WOMAN building a FIRE with driftwood.
 Kōkā is missing her CARVED CANE and seems spritely.
 And at first, the other woman looks like MEREANA...

... but she isn't pregnant, is older, and wears all white.
 It's another important presence in his life --
 His MOTHER, KAIKIRI (27).

Haytham holds Turīrī close to his chest.

HAYTHAM (CONT'D)

Hina! Kōkā!

Henare carries Haeata to the women and the warmth of the FIRE.
 The flames grow bigger and hungrier as Kōkā feeds it native bur.

Apart from this memory, Haytham is alone.
 He takes his son out of the OCEAN...

... coming to the foot of the DUNES.

HAYTHAM (CONT'D)

Hina! Kōkā!

No response.
 Nothing at all.

SUDDENLY --
 MEREANA arrives.
 She's clutching her stomach --
 Not in a position to move quickly.
 Nevertheless, she builds a FIRE from nearby DRIFTWOOD.
 He continues to hold his son, afraid to let him go.

HAYTHAM (CONT'D)

[Where's Kōkā?]

MEREANA

(out of breath)

[Gathering bur.]

He rubs his son's back.

She lights the FIRE...

... as KŌKĀ arrives holding a KETE.
She's leaning heavily on her CANE for support.
Mereana takes the kete from her.

KŌKĀ

[Let it smoke.]

MEREANA

[How much?]

KŌKĀ

[All of it.]

Haytham protectively holds Turirī in his arms.
Mereana opens the KETE --

HAYTHAM

[Hurry!]

She chucks handfuls of the PIRI-PIRI-BUR --
Into the growing flames...

... SMOKE wafts from the FIRE --
Haytham lifts and holds Turirī's face above it --
So he inhales the smoke...

HAYTHAM (CONT'D)

[That's it. Stay with me.]

KAIKIRI (O.S)

[Haeata, I'll never leave you.]

Haytham looks over --
And sees his MOTHER kiss his younger self's forehead --
As his FATHER holds him above the FIRE.
The two men now mirror each other.

The memory fades.

All that's left is one family of four --
The rolling ocean waves.
And black smoke.

LONG FADE OUT & IN:

LATER: (NOON)

HAYTHAM stands on the SHORE --
In the exact same spot as he did 10 years ago.
He's pensive.
His clothes are still damp.
All that remains of the FIRE is ash.

HAYTHAM'S VOICE
(harsh echo)
Don't hide from me.

All sound disappears.
No ocean waves.
No wind through the tussock.
No birdsong.

SUDDENLY --
THE VEILED WOMAN stands before him.
He yanks off the BLACK SILK VEIL --
Revealing KEITA (15).

HAYTHAM
[No more games.]

She doesn't respond.

HAYTHAM (CONT'D)
[Your-- Our baby rests... so should you.]

He takes her hands in his.
She remains cold, both to his touch and presence.

HAYTHAM (CONT'D)
[I thought killing Willamina--]

The mention makes Keita flinch.

HAYTHAM (CONT'D)
[--would bring us some peace. But it was I
who took you to her.]

She pulls herself free from him --

And walks towards the ocean.
Like *Yuki Kihara's "Takitimu Landing Site"*.

He doesn't follow.

HAYTHAM (CONT'D)
[I want to be forgiven.]

He turns away.
Tears wet his cheeks.

HAYTHAM (CONT'D)
[More than anything.]

All sound returns.
He looks back --
She's no longer there.
The only proof that she was is the BLACK SILK VEIL.
It's still lying on the sand.
He picks it up and looks to the sky --
The KĀHU circles him.

Haytham begins the long walk back to THE MANOR...

LONG DISSOLVE TO:

EXT. THE MANOR - MINUTES LATER

HAYTHAM stops before the PORCH STEPS.
The house looks healthier than it ever has.
As if its maladies have been remedied.
He inspects Mereana's ROSES...

... they too are flourishing.

He opens the FRONT DOOR and enters.

The haunting tune of *Tindersticks' "Running Wild"* creeps in...

LONG FADE OUT & IN:

INT. THE MANOR, 2ND FLOOR - MASTER BEDROOM - MORNING (1889)

Fresh morning light seeps through the WINDOWS --

Bathing the two new PARENTS --
 HAYTHAM (now 26) and an exhausted but overjoyed MEREANA (now 20) --
 Lay on their BED -- their infant DAUGHTER is nestled in her arms.
 He no longer wears the GLOVE.
 They look content -- in love -- finally at peace with each other.

INT. LEE & LEE PUBLISHING HOUSE - LATE AFTERNOON (1889)

HAYTHAM finds himself surrounded by DRAB BROWNS and GREYS.
 Closed WINDOWS.
 IRON CHANDELIERS.
 DUST in the air -- it flitters through the sunlight.
 He holds a familiar BOUND STACK of PAPERS.
 The reddish-brown stains remain.
 The cover reads: "*Mysteria by Mereana Halbert*"

Haytham navigates towards a CLOSED DOOR in the back.
 The BRASS DOOR LABEL is obscured.
 He opens it --
 Revealing a MAN behind a desk at the other end of the OFFICE.
 A short and balding old man.
 This is GEORGE LEE (now 56), the publisher.
 He is shaken by the younger man's appearance.

Haytham enters...

... slowly closes the door behind him.

EXT. THE MANOR - NOON (1891)

Sitting on the PORCH STEPS is TURĪRĪ (12) & TUHOROUTA (3).
 HAYTHAM (28) is seated on the GRASS COURT next to the ROSE BEDS.
 The flowers have continued to flourish --
 Their rough start has been remedied.
 He's reading a BOOK.
 The spine reads: "*Mysteria*"

The boys are pushing sticks through spuds and kumara.
 TurĪrĪ helps his younger brother.

In the distance, a CARRIAGE can be seen entering the FRONT PADDOCK.
 This immediately catches the boys' attention.
 The younger one becomes excited.
 His father closes the book.
 Tuhorouta takes off --

Bustling down the land.

Haytham sits down next to Turīri.
Helps finish the last skewers.

The CARRIAGE stops --
The DOOR swings open --
A woman climbs out -- before the DRIVER can help --
And runs to the boy.
She wraps her arms around him and lifts him up.
It's ANASTASIA (42).

The carriage continues towards THE MANOR.

Turīri takes the tray inside.
Haytham descends the STEPS and goes to reunite with his old flame.

INT. THE MANOR, 2ND FLOOR - MORNING (1891)

HAYTHAM (28) unlocks the only LOCKED DOOR.
MEREANA (22) is at his side.
He opens the door.
They see what's inside.

INT. THE MANOR, 2ND FLOOR - KEITA'S BEDROOM - CONTINUOUS

Shafts of light carve through the hole in the roof.
There's a thick mildew in the air.
All personal effects have been boxed up and removed.
Tattered, WHITE SHEETS cover the furniture.
It looks like a rotting mausoleum.
A ghost of its former self.

LONG DISSOLVE TO:

DAYS LATER: (MORNING)

HAYTHAM & MEREANA take in this rejuvenated room.
The smell of mildew is replaced with lavender.
Tuhorouta's old WAHAKURA rests atop the BED.
A soft PASTEL PINK & WHITE papers the walls.
This is definitely a GIRL'S ROOM.

EXT. RANGIATA, FRONT PADDOCK - NOON (1892)

The sky is dark greys and full clouds.

KŌKĀ (71) hobbles across the land with a little girl --
Her great-granddaughter, HENERATA (3).
She keeps looking at Kōkā's CARVED CANE.
She picks up a stick and imitates her.

Kōkā amusedly lifts the cane out in front of her --
In a fencing position.
Henerata mirrors her.
Kōkā gently lunges --
They playfully jab and parry --
Until the stick snaps.
Henerata begins to cry.
Kōkā hobbles forwards to soothe her -- begins to cough.
A terrible fit filled with laboured breath.
Her mokopuna stops her outburst...

... a faint SINGING is carried on the wind.
Back towards THE MANOR, Kōkā sees a WOMAN IN WHITE --
Her daughter KAIKIRI.
Beside her is HENARE.
The ghostly forms are joined by many others...

... almost never-ending -- Māori from generations past --
Kōkā's TĪPUNA.
Their presence is not ominous -- powerful but peaceful.

SUDDENLY --
She collapses.
The girl is left standing.

EXT. THE MANOR - MORNING (1892)

It's a blistering summer's day.

Under the shade of a nearby TREE --
A family of SIX rests on a WHITE LINEN SHEET.
The father, HAYTHAM (29) --
The mother, MEREANA (23) --
The other mother, ANASTASIA (43) --
The first boy, TURĪRĪ (13) --
The boy, ALEXANDER/TUHOROUTA (4) --
And the girl, HENERATA (3).

Above the TREE, a KĀHU circles the family.

A BLACK SILK SCARF hangs loosely around his neck.
Mereana holds his scarred LEFT HAND -- rubs it affectionately.
He kisses her.

His SCARF loosens and falls, covers the screen --

SMASH OUT.

OVER BLACK:

TITLE:

H A Y T H A M;

OR,

The Māori Gothic.

FADE OUT.

THE END.