

MARAKUNA SHOWDOWN 2.3

by

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TARA (V.O.)

I was five when Mum started coughing. Dad tried to hide it by turning up the volume on the short-wave radio.

Footsteps echo in a pitch black space.

TARA (V.O.)

But I knew she was sick. Her face white. Her eyes were black.

Click.

FILAMENT

turns blue. It's a mercury-vapour bulb, the sort that takes a few minutes to warm up before it can light a room.

WHITE HAND-WRAPPS

bind around a man's gnarled and swollen knuckles.

TARA (V.O.)

But mostly I knew it because Dad stopped hitting her.

COLOUR-WORN BOXING GLOVES

are pulled on.

TARA (V.O.)

She went away to hospital. Dad and I would fall asleep to the sound of radio static. I asked him what the sound was.

CANVASS BOXING BAG

Hiss-thump jab-jab-cross combinations. Lightning-fast. Rhythmic. Disciplined.

TARA (V.O.)

A signal from the universe. But I didn't know what that meant.

The stars talking.

I wanted to know what they were saying, but I knew not to ask too many questions.

One-one-two.

Mercury-vapour lights finally blink on to full brightness, revealing --

INT. GYM - NIGHT

Sparse, dusty, out-of-date.

Boxing bag casts a long shadow across a sweating, heaving chest.

BATEMAN 40s, lawyer, dark features, five-clock shadow, sharp muscles, but dead eyes.

LOCKER ROOM

Silent. A light comes from the gym.

A tailored white business shirt. Bateman buttons it all the way up.

He looks at himself in the mirror.

Emotionless.

EXT. PARKING LOT - NIGHT

Yellow streetlights reflect in the rain puddles.

Bateman pulls white cuffs tight so they appear from under the sleeves of his jacket.

He sees movement in the corner of his eye. Probably nothing. He crosses the street.

Bleep-bleep. BMW 730d black sedan unlocks. Sigh of leather seat as Bateman sits. Face aglow with blue control lights.

TARA (V.O.)

Every night in bed I watched the shadows on my wall. The stars shone through the broken branches of the tree.

Bateman drives through lonely --

CITY STREETS

TARA (V.O.)

Every night I pleaded with the stars. But they kept their secrets. I tried to catch the light, but it slipped between my fingers.

## INDUSTRIAL ESTATES

TARA (V.O.)  
 Until that night. Dad. His weight  
 on my bed. His warmth. He held me  
 in his arms.

## OLD DOCKYARDS

TARA (V.O.)  
 The starlight in the tears caught  
 in his beard.

until he comes to --

## COASTAL ROAD

Silvery grass flowing beside a calm moonlit ocean. Dashed  
 centreline reflects on the inside of the windscreen.

TARA (V.O.)  
 He never told me that Mum died.

He stops at an isolated turn-around overlooking the empty  
 ocean, the glow of the city just over the horizon. The sky is  
 starless.

## INT. BMW - NIGHT

TARA (V.O.)  
 But he didn't have to. Because that  
 night the stars said it all.

His pocket vibrates with incoming call.

## PHONE

Picture on phone: KATHERINE, 30s, stunning, holding seven-  
 year-old strawberry-blonde son TYLER tightly.

Caller is: Katherine. Accept or Ignore? Bateman takes the  
 third option: power off.

He checks his --

## WRISTWATCH

9:15.

In the --

## BMW

a rectangle of light frames his eyes. A silver luxury car  
 parks parallel to him within arm's reach.

He swaps to --

INT. SILVER CAR - NIGHT

In the driver's seat is GALBRAITH, late 50s, silver hair and a flashy smile, he wears a grey suit that's not as sharp as it once was. The knot in his tie is a small ball from being continually tightened and loosened.

GALBRAITH

Dammit, shut the door. Cold as piss out there.

Bateman turns down the visor, using the mirror to keep lookout.

BATEMAN

Quiet night?

GALBRAITH

Goddamn shit-fight. Seen the news? Tossing those bikie gangs out on their arse. Shutting down tattoo joints, massage parlours -- shit, they were dealing drugs through goddamn la-de-da cafes.

BATEMAN

I wasn't asking about your day.

GALBRAITH

(ignoring)

Premier declares war on organised crime and I'm the one stuck between cowboy cops and drug cartels.

Bateman sighs. He isn't interested in small-talk.

GALBRAITH (CONT'D)

You and me, Daryl, we're the shit-shovelers. Someone came along, dangling a diamond encrusted carrot and we looked at that and said, "Yes fucking please."

BATEMAN

Finished?

GALBRAITH

But they gave us shit to shovel. All we ask for, is commensurate compensation. A little property investment, perhaps?

Galbraith smiles and waves a sealed manila envelope, right size and shape for \$100,000 cash.

Bateman doesn't respond.

GALBRAITH (CONT'D)  
 Can't you smile? That's why they  
 call you Balls-of-Steel Bateman.

Galbraith hands over the envelope. Bateman squeezes the envelope so the cash fans out in the envelope. He puts it in his jacket.

GALBRAITH (CONT'D)  
 You even gonna count that?

Bateman pulls out a larger document envelope.

Galbraith leafs through it.

GALBRAITH (CONT'D)  
 High-rise apartments, Chinese iron  
 ore mines, even aforementioned la-  
 de-da cafes.

Galbraith licks the seal on the envelope and cuts his lip.  
 Bateman opens his car door.

GALBRAITH (CONT'D)  
 For a lawyer, Darryl, you're  
 alright. A bit uptight, but  
 alright.

No response. Galbraith wipes the blood off his lip and then licks his finger clean.

Bateman turns his lights on.

GALBRAITH (CONT'D)  
 Life's for living, my man. You  
 can't control everything. That's  
 your problem. You try to control  
 everything.

EXT. BATEMAN HOUSE - NIGHT

Glass, stainless steel and concrete monstrosity. Deformed brain-child of a modernist architect, illuminated proudly by up-lights everywhere.

Bateman parks his car in the driveway.

Bleep-bleep. Car doors lock. Porch light beckons.

Turns his phone on.

The front door swings gently in the breeze.

Beep.

On the --

PHONE

is a notification of missed call. The phone begins downloading all the missed calls that happened while it was turned off.

He pushes the door. It swings open into --

INT. BATEMAN HOUSE, FOYER - CONTINUOUS

Glossy black tiles, polished concrete furniture. The light is on.

Beep. Notification of text message: "Where are you?"

Was that a whimper from the sitting room? Turns toward the sitting room. The light is on there too.

Beep. Notification of text message: "Something's up. Come home now."

Into the --

SITTING ROOM

Someone sits on the couch near the door.

It's Katherine ... with panic in her eyes.

At the other end of the room, Tyler sits on the lap of an enormous man, BLACK, 40s, dressed in black biker's leather.

On the side-table -- a pistol and a shotgun.

BLACK

We were expecting you earlier.  
Don't be shy. Take a seat beside  
your lovely wife.

Bateman sits. Katherine takes his hand.

BLACK (CONT'D)

We were just getting acquainted.  
Turns out you two love your little  
boy very much.

KATHERINE

Please --

BLACK

Turns out you'd do anything for  
him.

BATEMAN

What do you want?

BLACK

Straight to business. I respect that. Personally, I'm all about business.

For example, someone wants to send a message. So they hire me. I pass on that message. I get a small fee, or a special favour. A tidy transaction.

The people who hired me, however -- for them it's not business. It's personal. You help the government take their homes, their livelihood, their families.

KATHERINE

If this is politics, then leave my son --

BLACK

How do you think he affords this lifestyle? Five-bedroom house. Expensive furniture. Luxury cars.

KATHERINE

(to Bateman)

What's he talking about?

Bateman stands.

BATEMAN

This is about me, not my family. Let them go. You want money?

Bateman takes out the envelope. Black smirks. Bateman has his attention.

BATEMAN (CONT'D)

Take this.

Bateman throws the envelope at Black.

KATHERINE

What is that?

BATEMAN

Let Tyler go. You have the money.

Black pokes open the envelope with the muzzle of his pistol. He looks intrigued for a moment but --

BLACK

Interesting ...



Black pushes the envelope away.

BLACK (CONT'D)  
... but I told you. For my clients,  
this is not business. It's  
pleasure.

Black stands. He clamps down Tyler's arm like a vice until the boy squeals in pain.

Bateman slowly clenches his fists but his eyes turn toward the pistol on the table next to Black's right hand.

Black meets Bateman's gaze, and hovers his right hand over the pistol, far enough to tempt Bateman, but close enough to taunt him.

Bateman unclenches his hands. He keeps his cool.

BATEMAN  
Here I am. Do to me what you need,  
just let him go.

BLACK  
Don't worry, I'll get to you. But  
first ...

Black twists Tyler's arm. Tyler screams. Katherine lunges forward and Black lets go of Tyler to smack her powerfully, knocking her down, dazed.

Tyler scrambles, hands and knees, wedges himself under the heavy avant-garde couch.

Bateman stands still, like a rock, eyes locked on the pistol. Black outsizes Bateman. Black snatches the shotgun and smashes the butt into Bateman's face.

Bateman lies on the ground. His face is reflected in a growing pool of blood on the gloss black tiles.

He locks gaze with his son, who's shivering with terror under the couch.

Bateman is repeatedly struck by Black.

KATHERINE  
(over and over)  
What have you done?

FADE TO BLACK

FADE IN

EXT. HOSPITAL ROOM - DAY

An open doorway into a hospital room. Inside we see Bateman, asleep under a thin blue sheet. No personal effects. No movement. A respirator gasps.

KATHERINE (O.S.)  
You be a good boy and sit there.

Katherine appears and leans against the doorframe.

A NURSE enters and presses a button on the machine.

NURSE  
(to Katherine)  
You can come in if you want.

KATHERINE  
No, I'm not staying.

Nurse leaves.

The sound of Tyler shifting in the hallway.

KATHERINE (CONT'D)  
(to Tyler OS)  
Stay there honey.

TYLER (O.S.)  
Why can't I see Dad?

KATHERINE  
Because he's not here.

She lies.

KATHERINE (CONT'D)  
(to Tyler)  
C'mon, it's time to go.

The respirator gasps.

INT. OFFICE - EARLY MORNING

Office cubicles. Humble, minimalist.

Bateman doesn't fill out his suit quite like he used to. He has a red scar above his right eye.

With him is a YOUNG LAWYER, 20s, fresh and keen, what Bateman used to be.

They stand, looking at Bateman's new desk. On it are his old computer and a half-empty plastic bag of personal items.

YOUNG LAWYER

Didn't expect you this early. You do know you're on graduated return to work?

BATEMAN

What's wrong with my old office?

YOUNG LAWYER

It's getting refurbished. Plus we thought this one would be quieter.

Silence.

YOUNG LAWYER (CONT'D)

(awkwardly)

Well, we had your computer set up. If you need anything, I'll be ...

Young Lawyer gestures down the hall.

MOMENTS LATER

Bateman sits at his desk, removes his phone from his pocket and places it squarely next to his keyboard. The background image still shows Katherine embracing his son. He turns it face down.

The computer boots up.

Unseen OFFICE WORKER occupies the adjacent cubicle. He doesn't know he can be heard.

OFFICE WORKER (O.S.)

(on the phone)

Don't know. Some guy who used to be a hotshot.

Bateman's downloaded emails keep increasing 147, 166, 176.

He watches the subject lines of the emails. Taps out boxing combos with his pen on the desk.

OFFICE WORKER (O.S.) (CONT'D)

Not office politics. Other stuff. You know, every company has a guy that deals with the grey areas. Well from what I heard, it was a dark grey.

One subject line reads: "Expression of Interest, consultation -- Marakuna."

OFFICE WORKER (O.S.) (CONT'D)

Of course it's rumour. No-one wants to know. Plausible deniability.

Bateman leans forward. Scrolls through other unread email subject lines, finds a more recent one, "Marakuna consultation job reopened."

He taps his pen a few times. He looks at the cubicle wall that hides his neighbour.

OFFICE WORKER (O.S.) (CONT'D)

I don't know. It's still early, he shouldn't be in for another hour yet, but I'll let you know.

He opens the Property Analytics Database and types: Marakuna.

EXT. HIGHWAY, EAST OF MARAKUNA - DAY

The sun looks down from high overhead. The horizon, a perfect circle encasing a flat landscape, featureless but for a single, thin black line through it's centre. And on that outback highway travels a small black dot, a BMW 730d.

INT. BMW - DAY

Bateman, expressionless. Colour has returned to his face and he looks fitter. Dashed white lines flash endlessly on the reflective surface of his sunglasses.

On the --

GPS

A single straight line leads to "Marakuna", 12km to destination. ETA 6 mins at 110 km/h.

And back to the --

BMW

The car loses power and Bateman checks the --

DASH

The speedometer decreases and the engine temperature gauge shoots up.

ROADSIDE - MINUTES LATER

Steam gushes from the open bonnet. The engine ticks.

BMW

He checks the instrument console. Still over-heating. Outside temperature 40 degrees Celsius.

He turns the key. No ignition.

Looks at --

PHONE

No service.

Looks at the engine again. Takes a mouthful of water from a bottle. Flings some water on the engine. It fizzes.

EXT. HIGHWAY, EAST OF MARAKUNA - LATER

Bateman walks down the road ...

Still no cars ...

Jacket over arm ...

Water bottle empty ...

EXT. CHINAMAN CREEK - LATER

A dry treeless riverbed. Bateman walks over the single-lane bridge.

FURTHER DOWN THE ROAD

Finally an old timber sign with faded letters, "Welcome to Marakuna" --

in the middle of nowhere.

EXT. MARAKUNA - DAY

Hot. Silent.

Wide, uncurbed streets. Dusty red tire marks lazily cut corners.

Queenslander bungalows, stained by bore water below, bleached by sunlight above. Spinifex pokes from under floorboards and from rusted-out roof gutters.

Bateman, wet from sweat, steps on, along the main street past the --

SCHOOLYARD

Dry and shadeless. Four nine-year-old CHILDREN sit facing each other, cross-legged, knee-to-knee in the dirt. They play a clapping game.

## CHILDREN

(singing)

There's a party on the hill  
 Would you like to come?

Yes.

Then pack your bags  
 And get your gun  
 How many bullets  
 Did you bring?

Six.

One, two, three  
 Four, five, six  
 Bang, bang  
 You're dead!

The "dead" SCHOOLBOY races over to the school fence and rests his head against the chainlink.

He stares at Bateman walking by. The schoolboy cocks his hand like a gun, lines up Bateman in his sights and

## SCHOOLBOY

Pow!

Bateman continues past the--

## SUPERMARKET - MINUTES LATER

In the windows are undressed mannequins. And dust, lots of dust.

The half-tuned local radio is playing. A shock-jock complaining about Muslim immigrants.

SUPERMARKET GIRL, teenager, ear studs, eyeliner, blue supermarket apron, sits on the concrete steps reading a tattoo magazine and smoking.

Her eyes follow Bateman. She blows smoke as he passes in front of the--

## YOUTH CENTRE

Cracked glass windows painted over with colourful graffiti. Inside an elderly man, NEIL FINLAY, 60s, fit but stern, vacuums the carpet. He's not in a hurry.

## EXT. EXCHANGE HOTEL - DAY

The only two-story building in town provides the only shade in town. It's made from hardwood timber, warped by the years.

Below is the bar and restaurant, above rooms open out to the second story verandah.

On a concrete bench out front, two OLD MEN, one in threadbare yellow shirt and the other wearing a cloth wide-brim hat.

They watch Bateman without moving.

INT. EXCHANGE HOTEL, BAR - DAY

A u-shaped bar in front of a wall of cold-room doors. The place is lined with worn out Akubras, beer labels, PBR stickers and big rig posters from the 80s. A pedestal fan screwed to the wall buzzes as it pans the room.

A COUNCIL WORKER, 50s, hi-viz shirt, obviously drunk, sits, letting his schooner sweat.

A woman is behind the bar tinkering with the controls of a cooling unit, MAUREEN, 20s, Glaswegian accent, with white tank top, denim shorts and eyeliner chosen carefully to show off her best assets.

Bateman enters and flops his folded jacket on a stool.

MAUREEN

(Glaswegian accent)

Bit hot under the collar there.

BATEMAN

My car's broken down up the highway about ten kays.

She pours him a glass of water.

MAUREEN

What can I do for you?

BATEMAN

I've booked a room.

She hands him the water.

BATEMAN (CONT'D)

Thanks.

She looks at his biceps with soft eyes as he downs the drink.

MAUREEN

Young Robbo's the person to call about your car. I'll go get you his number. Bec takes the bookings. She'll be back in a minute.

Bateman waits. The fan buzzes. Council worker eyes Bateman's suit.

COUNCIL WORKER  
You some kinda fancy man?

INT. BATEMAN'S ROOM - DAY

Sparse, dim in contrast with the glare from the window opposite. One bed for reclining. One rusty metal chair as a bedside table. And --

Bateman flicks the light switch --

--one light switch for decoration.

MAUREEN  
You sure you want this room?

Bateman looks out the window at --

SYMONDS' YARD

A crooked Queenslander on a patch of red dirt. Windows covered with al-foil or heavily curtained. A jumble of antennae and satellite dishes sprout from the roof. A power lead runs out into the back yard to --

MAUREEN (O.S.)  
First time in Marakuna, Mr Bateman?

-- a tan coloured 70s HOLDEN HQ and a discoloured aluminium caravan.

TARA SYMONDS, late teens, jeans rolled up, barefoot, could pass for a boy if her shirt wasn't soaked. She cleans the sides of the caravan with a high-pressure hose.

MAUREEN (O.S.) (CONT'D)  
From Glasgow originally. Bit smaller than home, but you get used to it. You get some characters come through I tell you that.

BATEMAN'S ROOM

MAUREEN  
Not staying long?

BATEMAN  
My gear is in my car.

MAUREEN  
You don't talk much.

BATEMAN  
You got that phone number?



She reaches into her bra for the --

NOTE

handwritten in blue pen: Young Robbo 492-222.

MAUREEN  
Vehicle recovery.

Looks at his mobile phone.

BATEMAN  
No reception?

MAUREEN  
Only one carrier, Mr Bateman.  
Welcome to Marakuna.

INT. PAYPHONE - LATER

Acrylic-walled phone box, scratched with graffiti, the tallest building north of the highway.

Bateman finishes talking on the phone and hangs up. Puts away the note with Young Robbo's number on it and gets out more change. Not enough for another call.

He scowls and looks out through the perspex at the roadhouse across the highway.

A water truck fills up at the high-flow diesel bowser.

EXT. ROADHOUSE - SOON AFTER

A 70s fibro building next to a yard where the cattle trucks park their trailers. A man, SAM BUTTON late 20s, scrawny, unbuttoned flannelette shirt, sits on a railing next to the ablutions donga.

Bateman walks to the roadhouse door.

MINUTES LATER

He exits, counting change.

The driver of the water truck, MULLET, 20s, overweight, outdated hairstyle, approaches Button. They exchange something, but not words.

Bateman averts his eyes and keeps walking. He knows a drug deal when he sees one.

INT. PAYPHONE - SOON AFTER

Armed with small-change, Bateman scrolls through his phone contacts and finds "Deirdre Carmichael, M.P."

INT. CARMICHAEL'S OFFICE - DAY

Crisp and clean, an electoral map on the wall and campaign pickets leaning in the corner. A photo on the desk of Carmichael shaking hands with a dignitary.

DEIDRE CARMICHAEL, MP, late 50s, adorned tastefully with splashes of colour everywhere, pink lips, red fingernails, floral blouse. She means business, but it not averse to using maternal charm.

CARMICHAEL

Mr Bateman, this is Deidre Carmichael. You're on speaker phone. The mayor Frank Gibbs is with me.

MAYOR FRANK GIBBS, 60s, round face, red nose, sideburns, grey trousers that tuck under his pot belly.

CARMICHAEL (CONT'D)

I was telling Frank about your work in China for the government. Myself and the rest of the cabinet thank you.

GIBBS

Pleased to have you on board. I look forward to finally making progress on making progress.

Gibbs gives Carmichael a smooth smile as though he has rehearsed this line for weeks.

Carmichael ignores Gibbs.

CARMICHAEL

You have a place to stay tonight?

INTERCUT BATEMAN/CARMICHAEL

BATEMAN

At the Exchange.

CARMICHAEL

No, no, wouldn't have it.

GIBBS

The locals can get a bit hairy on a Friday night.

CARMICHAEL

Stay with me at Greenway. I'll get the governess to set up the guest room for you.

BATEMAN

I have some things to take care of. Rain-check?

CARMICHAEL

Sure. See you in at my office first thing tomorrow morning.

INT. HOTEL ROOM - DAY

Bateman looks out his window at Tara as she runs a yellow lead form the house out to the shed. A rusted white tow truck transports his Beamer to Young Robbo's Smash Repairs, a tall shed across the lane.

INT. YOUNG ROBBO'S SMASH REPAIR - DAY

Spare parts line the walls. Tyres are mounted in stacks to the mezzanine. A corner of the workshop is sectioned off as office space with white fibro.

YOUNG ROBBO, 70s, balding. Grease fills the creases in his thick-skinned hands. The worn pocket of his overalls is reinforced with thin fishing line.

YOUNG ROBBO

You've got a leak in your radiator.

BATEMAN

Can you fix it?

YOUNG ROBBO

Radiator? Yes. But a warped head will need re-boring. Or replacement.

Bateman looks at him.

YOUNG ROBBO (CONT'D)

I'll have it ready next week. Unless we need parts. Then next month.

Young Robbo hangs the keys on a nail in the wall.

EXT. TARA'S BACKYARD - DAY

Tara is pulling with all her bodyweight on the wheel spanner, trying to loosen a wheel nut on the HQ Holden.

Bateman has his briefcase with him.

BATEMAN  
Need a hand?

TARA  
I got it.

Bateman watches. Eventually he walks over.

TARA (CONT'D)  
I said I got it.

BATEMAN  
Your car?

TARA  
1973 Holden HQ, five-litre V8.

BATEMAN  
You're a bit young for a car like that.

TARA  
Dad said I could have it if I could get it running.

BATEMAN  
Doesn't want you to have it, then?

She lets him have a go at the lug nut. He stomps on it and it loosens.

TARA  
What are you?

BATEMAN  
Sorry?

TARA  
What are you? Posh get-up. Leather suitcase.

BATEMAN  
It's called a briefcase.

TARA  
You're a cop aren't you?

BATEMAN  
Cop? What makes you say that.

TARA  
You know, come to investigate that guy that went missing.

BATEMAN  
What guy?

TARA

The lawyer. The one that came from  
the big city a few months ago.

INT. BAR - NIGHT

The population of Marakuna triples on a Friday night, and they all crowd into the public bar, townies, shearers, road crew and the odd truck-driver.

Country anthems blare from the jukebox.

A girl, developed, but clearly too young to be working a bar attends the till. It's ERIN, 17, with the right sort of looks for attracting the wrong sort of guys. Despite her age she can handle room full of drunks.

BATEMAN

Can I see the menu?

He sits down on a stool at the bar.

A man returns to find Bateman sitting on his stool. It's ARON LAKES (LAKESY), early 20s, a sinewy, tanned jackaroo, and the sort of drunk that turns an innocent remark into a bar fight.

LAKESY

That's my spot.

BATEMAN

Sorry. Didn't know this was taken.

LAKESY

Fucktard. My things are right here.

BATEMAN

I'll move.

LAKESY

Fucking yuppie. Thinks he can come  
in here with his poofter suit on --

ERIN

Shut your mouth, Lakesy. He's just  
ordering dinner.

Bateman takes the menu and leaves.

RESTAURANT - LATER

Bateman sits alone, eating his meal. He can see the patrons at the bar. Alan Jackson is playing on the jukebox.

Erin approaches with a perfectly poured pot of lager in each hand.

ERIN

I'm sorry about before.

Bateman looks over at the bar. Lakesy isn't there at the moment.

BATEMAN

That's okay. Are you and Lakesy ...  
?

ERIN

Well let's just say he thinks so.

Erin sits on the chair opposite him, crosses her legs and leans forward.

BATEMAN

(ironically)  
Take a seat.

Erin smiles. There is a moment of warmth between them.

ERIN

I couldn't have you dine alone.

She passes him one of the beers and raises hers.

ERIN (CONT'D)

A token ... Welcome to Marakuna.

BATEMAN

(chinks)  
To uninvited company.

Erin smiles. Drinks half the pot in a few gulps.

Bateman puts his drink down without it touching his lips. Erin notices.

BATEMAN (CONT'D)

So, you work the bar.

ERIN

Sometimes. Maureen's off tonight. Usually I'm in the kitchen ... And other stuff. Saving money up. Getting out of this shit-hole. To the Coast. Wouldn't mind some company when I do. Where are you headed?

BATEMAN

Marakuna, actually. Business to take care of.

ERIN

And what business is that?

Lakesy arrives back at the bar.

BATEMAN  
I don't think you'd find it  
interesting.

ERIN  
I'm interested.

BATEMAN  
Property Lawyer.

ERIN  
Nine-tenths of the law, right?

Out for the corner of his eye, Bateman notices Lakesy watching Erin.

BATEMAN  
An over-exaggerated figure.

ERIN  
So tell me, what does a property  
lawyer do?

BATEMAN  
It's complicated.

ERIN  
Now you're being coy. Try me. I've  
got the smarts to go with these  
looks.

Bateman sizes her up for a moment. He takes a sip of beer.

ERIN (CONT'D)  
Hey, that's mine.

Lakesy has built up enough Dutch courage and approaches the table.

BATEMAN  
If I asked Bec at the bar there  
what the fine was for selling  
alcohol to minors, what would she  
say? So, is it my beer or yours?

ERIN  
(playfully)  
You're a jerk.

BATEMAN  
Nine-tenths of the law, right? Now  
you'd better leave. Lakesy's on his  
way over and I didn't come here for  
this kind of trouble.

ERIN  
 Maybe next time then?

She leaves, pushing past Lakesy.

ERIN (CONT'D)  
 Fuck off Lakesy.

Bateman takes a last few bites of his meal and Lakesy stands beside the table, swaying slightly.

Bateman stands.

Lakesy grabs Bateman's arm.

LAKESY  
 I don't like you. And I don't want you near Erin.

BATEMAN  
 I get it, when you look at Erin, you see a strong, young woman. But that's not what a court would see a girl, a daughter, a sister. A child. And you're what ... twenty, twenty-one?  
 (shrugs free)  
 You're too old for that without going to jail. So, a word of advice, lay off the spirits, before you get yourself in trouble.

INT. BAR - SOON AFTER

Bateman stands at near the bar with his wallet out, ready to pay for his meal.

He is eyeballed by a narrow-hipped Button who looks at Lakesy and then to another man off-screen.

Bateman throws his cash on the counter

BEC  
 Can I get you a drink?

BATEMAN  
 Having an early one tonight.

Lakesy whispers to the Cowboy.

BEC  
 (nods toward Lakesy)  
 You don't waste time making enemies.



BATEMAN  
 Maybe I will have a drink.

BEC  
 What's your poison?

BATEMAN  
 Whiskey.

Bec puts an empty glass on the counter, ready to pour.

BATEMAN (CONT'D)  
 No, not that.

He points to the bottle behind the bar and throws down a fifty.

EXT. EXCHANGE HOTEL - RIGHT AFTER

Angle-parking on the main street in front of the Exchange: roo shooter trucks, utes and tray backs, all with tall aerials, Wrangler stickers, spotlights and cowboy music pumping.

Bateman notices Button leaning back to the wall beside the door as he leaves.

Bateman walks past the utes. Buuton follows at a distance.

MULLET (O.S.)  
 Hey, I know you!

It's the overweight guy with a mullet. The ring-leader of a small group of DEADBEATS.

Bateman glances but keeps walking.

MULLET (CONT'D)  
 I said, I know you!  
 (catches up to Bateman)  
 I know who you are.

BATEMAN  
 I don't think you do.

MULLET  
 Yeah, I do.  
 (gets in front of Bateman)  
 I seen you. I seen you when you put a scratch down the side of Tommo's ute.

BATEMAN  
 You're thinking of someone else.  
 Sorry.

MULLET

No, you'll be sorry, because that's Tommo over there.

TOMMO is a bull of a man, a wall of muscle with no neck -- and he doesn't look happy. He steps forward, and the rest of the gang circle around Bateman.

Bateman has nowhere to go. He grips the whiskey bottle like a weapon.

Tommo swings at him. Bateman dodges under his wild swinging arms, but is outflanked by one of the gang and receives a flurry of punches from the side.

He scuffles his way loose and brings the corner of the whisky bottle down on the back of Tommo's head. The bottle refuses to break, but Tommo stops to finger his wound.

Bateman is outnumbered and surrounded. His face is bruised.

BEC

Piss off ya bastards!

Bec appears and throws a bucket of water on the assailants.

BEC (CONT'D)

Leave the new fella alone. There may be no copper in town but I'll ban you from the pub unless you go home now!

Mullet picks bits of goop from his hair.

MULLET

Jesus, Bec. What is this shit?

BEC

Dirty dishwater. Now piss off!

EXT. EXCHANGE HOTEL, EXTERNAL STAIRS - RIGHT AFTER

Maureen follows him Bateman up to --

BATEMAN'S ROOM

He opens the door to his room. Forgets the light switch is decoration. Starlight streams through the open window. He sits on the bed.

BATEMAN

That Bec is pretty feisty.

MAUREEN

You alright, Mr Bateman? Can I do anything for you?

BATEMAN

I'll be fine thanks.

Maureen leans against the door frame.

BATEMAN (CONT'D)

What was all that about?

MAUREEN

Just the boys letting off steam.

BATEMAN

I think it was more than that.

MAUREEN

Tempers running a bit high. With the drought, and now all this stuff going on with the coal seam gas.

BATEMAN

Well, all I can say is thank God for Bec. She can really hold her own.

MAUREEN

She always protects her girls. She likes the way you stood up for Erin back at the restaurant. But, Mr Bateman, the boys ... they're not too keen on suits at the moment. You know, bank managers, lawyers ... I'm just saying, perhaps you could dress down a little.

BATEMAN

Thanks, Maureen. I'll be fine.

MAUREEN

Some of these guys have lost businesses, homes. And the others are scared of losing what little they have. And when they are scared, they fight.

BATEMAN

Good night, Maureen.

MAUREEN

Good night, Mr Bateman. Just so you know, I think you're bleeding.

Maureen leaves.

Bateman tests his temple with his finger. He sits down next to the window, and stares at the bottle in his hand. He unscrews the small aluminium cap from the whiskey bottle.

His hand shakes.

He dabs some alcohol on the end of his index finger and rubs it on his wound.

He puts his feet up and looks out the window toward--

#### SYMONDS' YARD

In the starlight, Tara climbs the tree in her back yard and lies down on the roof with her hands behind her head. She looks up into the sky.

#### BATEMAN'S ROOM

Bateman watches from his window. He takes a swig from the bottle.

#### NEXT DAY

Bateman wakes, still in the chair, the bottle is empty. He puts his sunglasses on, wincing as the frame contacts his bruised eye.

The air brakes of a road train rumble in the distance.

#### EXT. EXCHANGE HOTEL - DAY

Bateman continues back through the town, past the

#### YOUTH CENTRE

An old man, Neil sits on a plastic chair outside.

The sound of an angle grinder comes from Tara's shed.

#### INT. SUPERMARKET - DAY

Bateman buys Berocca from Supermarket Girl, as well as a check shirt and jeans. The radio still needs tuning.

#### INT. CARMICHAEL'S OFFICE - DAY

Carmichael leans against the front of her desk. Bateman stands with his back to the bright light of the window. Gibbs sits on a sofa, drinking Scotch neat.

CARMICHAEL

I am convinced that many of them  
can be swayed.

GIBBS

They can't stop the fracking by  
locking their gates.

CARMICHAEL

Please don't use that word, Frank.

BATEMAN

(to Gibbs)

Not legally. But do you want to  
hire a lawyer to stand there every  
time an engineer has to cut open  
the lock on a fence?

CARMICHAEL

What would you recommend, Darryl?

BATEMAN

We need a groundswell of support.  
Focus on those who can be swayed.  
If we can get that, and then an  
agreement ...

CARMICHAEL

Avoid arbitration?

BATEMAN

Become adversarial and people dig  
their heels in. We need the support  
of the community, not just their  
compliance.

CARMICHAEL

The community meeting tonight, can  
I ask you to sit in on the panel?  
Keep things on track, answer any  
legal questions that arise?

EXT. YOUTH CENTRE - DAY

Neil notices Bateman looking through the door at the  
teenagers boxing in the gym.

NEIL

Don't think I've seen you around  
here before. You new in town?

BATEMAN

Here on business.

NEIL

Really, what do you do?

BATEMAN

I'm just here for the community meeting tonight.

NEIL

Ah, yes. Coal-seam gas. Bit of a hot topic at the moment.

Bateman tries to continue walking.

NEIL (CONT'D)

So do you box?

Bateman stops.

BATEMAN

Not recently.

NEIL

(referring to Bateman's bruised face)

Maybe you should get back into it.

BATEMAN

It was just a misunderstanding.

NEIL

Happens in this town.

Awkward silence.

NEIL (CONT'D)

I'm sorry, I haven't introduced myself.

Neil holds out his hand. Bateman shakes it.

BATEMAN

Darryl Bateman.

NEIL

Neil Finlay. People call me Rev.

BATEMAN

Rev?

NEIL

Neil's fine though. I'm the minister of the Uniting church here in town. Although I wear a few different hats. The boxing here on weekends. Gives some of the older teens something to do. You okay?

Bateman looks surprised.

NEIL (CONT'D)  
That's okay, I break most of the  
moulds.

Bateman can't help glancing into the gym.

NEIL (CONT'D)  
Seriously. Come on in, I'll give  
you a spar.

BATEMAN  
What? Fight you?

NEIL  
Don't worry, I'll go easy on you.

Neil gets up and reveals he has a prosthetic leg.

BATEMAN  
A wooden leg?

NEIL  
Told you I break moulds.

INT. YOUTH CENTRE - DAY

A threadbare boxing gym. Paint peeling on the walls, floors  
are well-vacuumed though.

Neil grabs one pair from among many dusty leather boxing  
gloves from a locker.

NEIL  
Use these any time.

A dusty ring sits in the centre. Bateman holds open the ropes  
as they enter the ring.

NEIL (CONT'D)  
Fighting parsons -- it's not as  
unusual as you think. Back in the  
1800s, Marakuna was a rough place.  
Priests used boxing to gain respect  
in the community. You lose against  
the father, you had to go to mass.

BATEMAN  
Works for you?

NEIL  
When you lose I won't make you go  
to church, if that's what you mean.

BATEMAN  
You seem confident.

NEIL

I left a leg in Borneo, but I've still got my right hook.

They circle each other around the ring, throwing half-hearted exploratory jabs.

BATEMAN

You said misunderstandings happen in this town. What did you mean?

NEIL

Tempers are running high. With the community debate tonight --

BATEMAN

Community forum.

NEIL

-- Community debate, people are worried and everyone has already picked sides.

BATEMAN

Which side of the fence do you fall on?

Neil circles Bateman.

NEIL

God sits enthroned on the circle of the Earth and the people are but grasshoppers to him.

BATEMAN

Not saying?

NEIL

There's more to this life. Fourteen years I've been serving this community. I have a parish larger than some European nations. Half that time's been drought. Before that it was flood, locust plague, fire. Look into a farmer's eyes and tell him have faith in the world. I can't do it. Too much futility, heartbreak and --

(knocks on wooden leg)

-- loss. But there's a purpose to all this madness. It's not income, or food or security. Tell me, Darryl, what's your purpose?

BATEMAN

I don't need any God to help me find my purpose.



NEIL

Ah, so you are a self-made man, a law unto yourself.

BATEMAN

I leave God to his business, and he leaves me to mine.

NEIL

You are his business.

EXT. EXCHANGE HOTEL, DONGA - IMMEDIATELY AFTER

Two white dongas with a half-hearted attempt to make it homely. Erin sits on a sun-lounge, reading. Maureen waters the pot-plants by her door. They were bikini tops and denim shorts.

MAUREEN

Good morning. Hope you're feeling better this morning.

Bateman stumbles, distracted by the bikini tops.

MAUREEN (CONT'D)

Watch out for them goanna holes.

Bateman notices that she's watering cactuses.

BATEMAN

You don't have to --

ERIN

Why don't you come over here and I'll make sure your ankle is okay?

Bateman is flushed. But continues walking.

MAUREEN

Have a nice day, Mr Bateman.

EXT. MARAKUNA - DAY

Bateman walks back toward the Exchange past Tara's house and sees the curtain pulled back slightly. Whoever is inside is watching him and quickly drops the curtain when spotted.

A police car drives past and parks out the front of the Exchange.

INT. EXCHANGE HOTEL - IMMEDIATELY AFTER

Bateman walks up to the bar.

BEC

How's your head this morning?

BATEMAN

Fine. Is there a dry cleaner in town?

BEC

I'll get Erin to put it through the wash. Should be dry for tonight.

BATEMAN

What's the cop doing here?

BEC

He's the officer based at Mount Damien. Long way to drive all the way out here. Maybe he's here to make sure the meeting goes smoothly tonight.

BATEMAN

I just thought ... I heard something about a lawyer going missing.

BEC

He stayed here a few months back. Same room you were in. Left after a couple weeks. Didn't check out. But that's not that unusual. I guess he just went back to wherever he came from. Out here people talk bullshit in their sleep. Who have you been talking to?

BATEMAN

The young girl who lives next door. At the house this side of Young Robbo's.

BEC

Young Tara-Leigh. Nice enough. Keeps to herself. A bit weird, but that's not surprising considering her father. Come to think of it, that lawyer had been hanging around her a bit.

(some Hippies walk in)

Speaking of weirdos, here comes some greenies come to protest the mining companies at the meeting tonight. Never thought the greenies and the cockies would team up with each other.

INT. COMMUNITY CENTRE - NIGHT

Tempers flare in the packed hall.

A panel of representatives face angry community members. Between them, three rectangular function tables are pushed end-to-end with mikes and water bottles set at regular intervals. Among the representatives are Bateman, Gibbs, and JASON HOWE, scientist, late 20s, dressed in ill-fitting slacks and button up shirt. Carmichael presides silently among the mining PR staff.

Community members heckle the panel. People of all ages and persuasions are there: land holders, cockies, townies, families, roo-shooters, school-teachers, everyone.

SARGE, early 40s, clean-cut, greying temples, stands by to make sure no-one gets hurt.

GREENIE

-- not just an aquifer, but a delicate ecosystem, the home of a recently discovered bore-welling species of goby fish.

FARMER 1

Can you guarantee the safety of the aquifer? I rely on this to feed and water my stock.

Combination of cheers and jeers from the crowd.

FARMER 2

Not all of us have bores. There's a fucking drought! The bank's knocking at my door if we don't make a deal now, I've lost my farm!

More noise from the crowd.

GIBBS

(over the noise)  
Stop blaming the drought. The wool industry's been dead in the water for 20 years. We need mining. For us, for our children.

The crowd doesn't like this. A rotten vegetable lands on Gibbs. Bateman sees where things are going and cracks the seal on his bottled water, but when the next person gets up he tightens it again.

BUSINESS OWNER

Bullshit. Miners don't stop in town let alone stay in town. They don't spend a cent. Same thing in Mount Damien. Same thing in the rest of the state.

Bateman peels the label off the bottled water.

GIBBS

That's because we run them out of town. We need to welcome them to the community.

FARMER'S WIFE

A hundred years my family have given birth and died on this land. I'd burn it all down before I'd let those greedy bastards set one foot on it.

The crowd likes this.

GIBBS

Pull your head out of your arse, Ethyl!

The crowd explodes. Rotten vegetables are thrown at Gibbs, and Bateman takes the mic from Gibbs.

BATEMAN

(into mic)  
Fracking.

But no-one hears him. The vegetables are going all over Gibbs, Bateman, the Sarge. Burley council worker goes to throw one at Carmichael, but backs down when she gives him the death stare.

BATEMAN (CONT'D)

(louder)  
Fracking.

He seems to be heard.

BATEMAN (CONT'D)

Induced hydraulic fracturing. Hydrofracturing. Hydrofracking. Or just plain old fracking. I'm not going to lie to you. When I hear the word I think --

ROO-SHOOTER

Frack you!

The crowd laughs.

BATEMAN

(smiles)  
-- I think flames coming from the kitchen tap. I think polluted water, sick kids, poisoned stock, mutant bottom-dwelling scum-feeders  
...

(MORE)

BATEMAN (CONT'D)  
 (puts hand on Gibbs's  
 shoulder)  
 ... no, not you, Frank.

Crowd laughs. Carmichael is impressed.

BATEMAN (CONT'D)  
 I think. But I'm not a scientist. I  
 don't know about the chemicals ...  
 (points to Jason)

JASON  
 Benzene and toluene.

BATEMAN  
 Yep, benzene and whatever-he-told-  
 uene. I'm not a chemist, or an  
 environmental engineer. Anyone here  
 a smoker?

Half the audience raise their hand.

BATEMAN (CONT'D)  
 (to an old-timer in the  
 front row)  
 Got a light?

Bateman catches a box of matches.

BATEMAN (CONT'D)  
 I don't know any of this stuff. But  
 I trust the people who do. Here's a  
 sample from the Dingo Creek camp.  
 Jason, is this safe to drink?

JASON  
 (going along with it)  
 Yes?

CARMICHAEL  
 (quietly to Jason)  
 Is that an actual sample?

BATEMAN  
 What I do know is that I'm afraid.  
 I'm afraid of some stranger  
 entering my property.  
 (lights match)  
 I'm afraid my family will get hurt.  
 (lowers match)  
 But I'm also afraid that I can't  
 provide for my family.  
 (match goes down into the  
 neck of the bottle)  
 So I can't stay locked up forever.  
 (match fizzes in the  
 water)  
 (MORE)

BATEMAN (CONT'D)  
I have to learn to trust.  
(drinks the water)

INT. FOYER - LATER

Members of the panel push through the fire-door exit and make their way through the empty community centre foyer. They can't wait to get out of there, but they are relieved at the result.

JASON  
(to Bateman)  
That was a pretty crazy stunt you pulled back there.

Bateman brushes vegetables off his suit.

BATEMAN

Well, I didn't come off scot-free.

Turmoil erupts behind them. The Greenie scuffles his way through the panel. Lakesy steps in and keeps the Greenie from hurting Carmichael.

GREENIE  
You filthy liar. That wasn't even a water sample. I don't know how you live with yourself.

He spits on Bateman, and Sarge pushes back. Sarge gets a face full of phlegm as he man-handles the greenie out of the room.

CARMICHAEL  
(to Lakesy)  
Thank-you Mr Lakes.

INT. COMMUNITY CENTRE, CHANGE ROOMS - NIGHT

Bateman, shirtless, scrubs his shirt with soap in the handbasin.

Sarge enters.

BATEMAN  
Sorry you had to deal with that.

Sarge takes off his watch to wash the spit off his face. It is an expensive watch.

SARGE  
Pretty normal for a Saturday night.  
Usually they're drunk though.

BATEMAN  
Pretty quiet otherwise?

Sarge puts his watch back on.

BATEMAN (CONT'D)  
Nice watch.

SARGE  
Wife got it for me. Twenty-five  
years on the force.

BATEMAN  
Seen a lot?

Bateman buttons up his shirt.

SARGE  
Not a lot out here. Mostly traffic  
offences, drunken brawls, suicides.  
Other stuff.

BATEMAN  
What's the other stuff?

Lakesy enters and goes into a stall. We hear Lakesy hoc a  
loogie into the bowl.

BATEMAN (CONT'D)  
Missing persons? I heard rumours  
about another lawyer. The one  
before me.

SARGE  
Haven't heard anything. Got a name?

BATEMAN  
Ryan Chapel. Booked in at the  
Exchange a few months back.

SARGE  
I'll look into it.

Bateman turns to leave.

SARGE (CONT'D)  
Before you go.

He hands Bateman his business card.

SARGE (CONT'D)  
Any more problems, call me direct.

INT. GREENWAY STATION HOUSE - LATER THAT NIGHT

A stately station house in the federation style, rich timber  
features, wrought iron, multiple storeys, and a maze of  
passageways, stairs, and balconies.

Carmichael wheels and deals in the dining room at a round table, working through a deal between the mining company and landholders.

BATEMAN

How are things going in there?

GIBBS

(patting Bateman on the  
back)

Pretty bloody good, thanks to you.

BATEMAN

Pleasure.

GIBBS

Things got a bit hairy at the community centre, but you kept it all business-like. That's what I like. A man who is all business. Too many people let their emotions run wild. Interferes with their better judgement.

Strong winds buffet the house. The walls creak and the lights dim.

The meeting concludes and Carmichael approaches.

CARMICHAEL

Two types of people, Darryl. Wombats and kangaroos. Most are wombats, their whole world is three inches in front of them. Pushing through the dirt day after day. Problem is, if you threaten their shitty little hole, they dig themselves in and you never get them out.

GIBBS

But you did, you little beauty. You ripped those little suckers right out of their holes.

Carmichael's eyes glaze and sips from a champaign flute.

GIBBS (CONT'D)

Looks like champaign is in order.  
(leaves)

CARMICHAEL

Gibbs is the other sort. A kangaroo. Jumps from one thing to the next, and doesn't even know why. Eventually he'll jump out in front of a road train.



Lakesy looks intently at Bateman from across the room.

BATEMAN

But you, Darryl, they said you were the man for the job and they were right.

(referring to Lakesy)

Looks like there is someone here who doesn't approve of you, though.

BATEMAN (CONT'D)

What's he doing here?

CARMICHAEL

Mr Lakes is one of my station-hands. I keep him around, odd jobs and such. Someone's got to keep the roos off my property.

BATEMAN

And which one are you?

CARMICHAEL

What do you mean?

BATEMAN

Wombat or Kangaroo?

CARMICHAEL

The eagle.

BATEMAN

The one on the roadside picking at the road kill?

CARMICHAEL

The one that sees everything. Like you. You did well tonight.

INT. CARMICHAEL STATION HOUSE, VERANDAH - NIGHT

The verandah commands a wide view of the horizon. A scorching gust blows chaff onto Bateman's face.

Lakesy appears behind Bateman.

LAKESY

You know why I don't like you?

BATEMAN

Good evening Mr Lakes.

LAKESY

Because I don't like any of the sleaze bags that Erin gets in with

...

BATEMAN

You got anything new to say?

LAKESY

Because I know what they do to the girls in this town, promising --

The lights go out, all the people in the house, gasp and murmur.

The wind gusts. Sarge appears.

SARGE

The power is out. It's a storm.

BATEMAN

At least the drought has broken.

LAKESY

That's wind from a dry storm. There is no rain in that.

A series of faint red smudges on the skyline.

BATEMAN

What is that?

LAKESY

That's what you get from dry lightning strikes. Fire.

EXT. GRASSFIRE SITE - NIGHT

Voices are muffled by the overwhelming roar of grassfire -- booming orders are reduced to frantic gesturing. All hands on deck -- they barge past Bateman. Lakesy, Sarge and a bunch of others, all with wet sacks over their shoulders and their faces wrapped in t-shirts.

Bateman leaves his jacket in the tray of a nearby ute, douses his burlap and hauls it to the action.

He finds what looks like the shape of Sarge and follows.

For a moment he loses sight of the others ... Then: silhouetted figures, quickly obscured by the billowing black smoke.

He turns to retreat, but it's too late -- betrayed by a sudden south-westerly -- now surrounded by flame.

He beats a narrow path through the fury, but is forced into submission by a wall of heat.

Through the crackling air he sees a face turn toward him -- a man's face, blackened, a devil. A look of recognition passes between them.

The air is raw energy and Bateman is pushed to his knees, just in time to see Lakesy turn away, and leave Bateman in the hands of fate.

Bateman wills himself to his feet. He raises his sack to his face like a shield. He pushes back against the fire, embracing his last moment.

He meets a sheer metal wall. The door of the ute opens and he is dragged inside the cab.

SARGE

Get in.

EXT. FIRE CAMP - LATER

The fires are almost out.

Men, blackened by ash stand around the Mullet's water truck. Drinking water, dousing their faces in buckets. A MAN bends over, coughing.

SARGE

Thought you were a goner for a second.

BATEMAN

Me too. You turned up just in time.

SARGE

Why didn't you get out of there?

BATEMAN

I was following Lakesy. He saw me in trouble, but turned away.

SARGE

What was he thinking?

MAN

He was following you, Sarge.

MULLET

Where is Lakesy?

EXT. BURNT FENCELINE - SOON AFTER

Darkness fills the sky, smouldering remnants twinkling. The headlights of the police vehicle flicker as it traverses uneven ground -- a silent satellite moving across the heavens.

TARA (V.O.)

Stop looking at your watch and look up at the stars.

RYAN (V.O.)

It's just that it's getting late.  
My God, you're right! These stars  
are beautiful! I could die happy.

TARA (V.O.)

Marakuna has the best night sky in  
the world. So far from the lights  
of civilisation.

RYAN (V.O.)

I'd believe that.

TARA (V.O.)

It's the sand.

RYAN (V.O.)

The sand?

TARA (V.O.)

Most places, the wind picks up the  
dust and it drifts up there, in the  
sky. But we have coarse grainy  
soil, it falls out of the sky.  
Clean and clear. No atmospheric  
dust.

RYAN (V.O.)

You sure know a lot.

INT.SARGE'S UTE - CONTINUOUS

Sarge driving with Bateman riding shotgun and Mullet behind.  
Silent.

TARA (V.O.)

What's the city like at night?

RYAN (V.O.)

You've never been to the city?

TARA (V.O.)

Dad never leaves the house.

EXT. AFTERMATH OF THE FIRE - CONTINUOUS

They get out of the car. They leave the headlights on.

RYAN (V.O.)

Doesn't mean you can't.

TARA (V.O.)

(lighthearted)  
And leave Marakuna starlight  
behind?

They each get a light from the car, two hand torches and a hand-held spotlight.

RYAN (V.O.)  
They've been around millions of years, I'm sure they'll do fine without you.

TARA (V.O.)  
Still. I'd hate to be the one to --

RYAN (V.O.)  
Still. You should see the city lights one day.

They are three silhouettes, scanning the ground with light.

TARA (V.O.)  
What do they say?

RYAN (V.O.)  
What, the city lights?

Bateman comes upon a shape on the ground, but keeps his distance.

TARA (V.O.)  
Yeah. The stars talk to me, but what do the city lights say?

Sarge and Mullet watch while Sarge bends down to inspect, handkerchief to his face.

RYAN (V.O.)  
I don't know. What do the stars tell you?

TARA (V.O.)  
Stories.

RYAN (V.O.)  
Really?

Sarge looks back at Bateman and Mullet.

SARGE  
(to Bateman)  
Remember asking me what my job involved? This is the other thing.

INT. MULLET'S WATER TRUCK - NIGHT SOON AFTER

Both men are silent as the cab bounces around. The two-way radio chirps in and out.

BATEMAN  
I'm sorry.

MULLET

I wasn't your fault Bateman.  
Anyway, he wasn't really my friend.  
He was okay.

Mullet pulls down the visor and catches a joint.

MULLET (CONT'D)

Something to take the edge off.

Mullet lights up.

BATEMAN

Why did you pick a fight with me?

MULLET

Yeah, that.

BATEMAN

Lakesy put you up to it.

MULLET

A bit of fun. Get the new guy.

BATEMAN

And it was Lakesy that led me into  
the fire.

MULLET

He wouldn't have done that. I grew  
up with him, we gave him shit all  
the time. He's got this stutter.  
Goes away when he drinks.

BATEMAN

He's pretty intense about Erin.

MULLET

Yeah, he's got a thing for her.  
(corrects himself)  
Had.

BATEMAN

What about the others? Tara, for  
example.

MULLET

Old Man Symonds' daughter? No-one  
goes near her. Dad's a bit strange.  
Never leaves his house. Listens to  
the radio waves all day.  
(takes a puff)  
Keeps a pretty close eye on her,  
though.

BATEMAN

No-one goes near her? What about  
that last lawyer?

MULLET

Don't know nothing about him. Look,  
I'm pretty tired. Why are you  
interested in Tara, anyhow?

INT. SYMONDS' HOUSE - SAME TIME

Technological devices, wires and parts pack the shelves, like a disorganised museum of communications equipment from the past fifty years -- crystal sets, short wave radios, UHF receivers, computer screens.

The face of MACARTHUR SYMONDS is obscured in shadows. A cigarette glows as he draws on it. Smoke swirls.

He taps a pen on the desk as he listens to the police scanner.

VOICE OF SARGE

Mount Damien Mobile calling nine-  
eight-nine. Do you copy?

Car lights pass the window.

HQ VOICE

Loud and clear, what is your  
request? Over.

Symonds opens the curtains and sees Mullet stop and let Bateman out.

VOICE OF SARGE

We have a code five-o-one, send us  
a government contractor, rendezvous  
Greenway Station turnoff, fourteen  
point four kilometres south of  
Marakuna. Over.

EXT. EXCHANGE HOTEL - SAME TIME

Bateman rubs his face. He doesn't feel good.

HQ VOICE (V.O.)

Copy that, code five-o-one request  
QAS assistance, address 14 point 4  
kilometres south Townsend Highway  
Marakuna. Over.

He tries to forget.

EXT. ROADHOUSE - SOON AFTER

Bateman instinctively goes to where he last saw Button, and Button knows that look in Bateman's eyes.

INT. EXCHANGE HOTEL, ROOM - SOON AFTER

Bateman goes to flick on the light, but remembers -- it's decoration. He relaxes by loosening his sleeves and undoing his belt. He puts a bottle of rum on the table and sits down. Then he tightens his belt around his arm. It's dark.

EXT. TARA'S BACKYARD - NEXT MORNING

Tara cuts off the caravan door with a cordless angle grinder. Bateman approaches dressed in jeans and shirt.

BATEMAN

You'll take a hand off with that if you're not careful.

She lifts up her safety goggles.

TARA

Didn't recognise you without your suit.

BATEMAN

Yeah, well, my job here is done. It got a little hot to wear a suit anyhow.

TARA

You outta here then?

She puts the grinder in the back seat of the car.

BATEMAN

Well, I just talked to Young Robbo. Car should be ready in a day or two.

TARA

What? He's working on a Sunday. He must really want to get rid of you.

BATEMAN

What about you? Your car ready yet?

TARA

Listen to this.

She leans into the car and turns the ignition. Nothing but clicks.

BATEMAN

So you're not about to leave just yet.

TARA

It was working this morning.



BATEMAN

Why you keen to leave Marakuna anyway?

TARA

Originally, I met a guy from the city. Offered me a place to stay. Till I found my feet.

BATEMAN

The lawyer?

TARA

Yeah. Before I finished school.

BATEMAN

What did Dad think?

TARA

It wasn't what you think. He was old. He had a daughter himself.

BATEMAN

So what makes you think something happened to him?

TARA

I turned him down, but left to get his business card, in case I changed my mind. Next minute he drove off. Didn't even check out.

Tara sees her Dad at the window.

TARA (CONT'D)

Dad's looking for me. I got to go.

She looks down at the dirt. Bateman tries to study her face.

BATEMAN

Does your Dad hurt you?

She looks at him, a little surprised. Is she hiding it?

TARA

Wow. Mr Intensity.

She shakes her head, not knowing what to make of the question. She turns to leave.

BATEMAN

Wait! You changed your mind about leaving. Why?

TARA

Which room you in?

Bateman points at the window to his room.

TARA (CONT'D)  
I'll find you later.

INT. EXCHANGE HOTEL

Bec stacks bottles into a cold-room behind the bar. Doyle sits in his spot. Bateman stares at a whiskey glass. The fan buzzes.

BEC  
Another drink?

Bateman throws five on the counter. Bec pours a long shot of whiskey into his glass of ice.

BEC (CONT'D)  
What happened to Lakesy, that's pretty rough.

Bateman downs the whole shot.

BEC (CONT'D)  
Your car's almost fixed.

BATEMAN  
How do you know?

BEC  
Word gets around. Small town.

Bateman throws another note on the counter.

BEC (CONT'D)  
I don't offer advice, but if you're driving home tomorrow, you'd better slow down. It's a long drive if you're hung-over.

BATEMAN  
Gotta go. Unfinished business.

BEC  
Have it your way.

She pours him and drink and then she walks out.

DOYLE  
Heard you killed Lakesy.

Bateman downs his drink.

EXT. EXCHANGE HOTEL - SOON AFTER

Bateman exits the front door of the hotel. Sarge in his police car pulls up in front of him.

BATEMAN

Sarge.

SARGE

Got some news for you. Jump in.

INT. SARGE'S UTE - RIGHT AFTER

SARGE

You asked about your friend.

BATEMAN

He's not my friend. We worked for the same company, but I never met him.

SARGE

Well, I looked into it for you. He was reported missing by his family a few months back.

BATEMAN

After he left here?

SARGE

A few days after. But he made it back. His car was at his house. He signed out of the Exchange, paid for fuel by credit card all the way back to the coast.

BATEMAN

So what happened?

SARGE

Officers found drugs in his car. Traced to a city dealer.

BATEMAN

They never found him though?

SARGE

The drug wars, maybe. Came out here to get away from it but it caught up with him when he got back.

Stops the car but leaves it idling.

SARGE (CONT'D)

Well, after last night, I thought I'd do you a favour and find out for you.

INT. DONGA - SAME TIME

Button stands shirtless, holding back the curtain, looking out at Sarge and Bateman talking in the ute.

Trippy seventies rock and marijuana smoke fills the room. He takes his phone from the pocket of his jeans.

BUTTON

Yeah, he's talking to the Sarge now  
 ... You don't have to, I'll do it  
 ... I said I'll do it. Whatever.  
 How long till he gets here then?

He hangs up. The silhouette of a NAKED WOMAN pulls him down onto the mattress on the floor. We don't see who she is. Then --

OUT THE WINDOW

NAKED WOMAN (O.S.)

Who are they getting, baby?

BUTTON (O.S.)

A bad man.

Bateman gets out of the car.

INT. YOUTH CENTRE - DAY

Neil is warming up, but Bateman easily dodges Neil's punches.

NEIL

A bit ginger today?

BATEMAN

I'm fine.

NEIL

Or is something on your mind?

BATEMAN

I'm sure there's something on yours, though.

NEIL

Tell me something about yourself.

BATEMAN

Like what?

NEIL

You got family?

BATEMAN

Son.

NEIL

How old?

BATEMAN

Almost six.

NEIL

Impressionable age. Wife?

BATEMAN

Estranged.

NEIL

Get to see your boy?

BATEMAN

No.

NEIL

I don't see either of my boys -- grown up of course. Can't blame them. I was too harsh. Heck, I was just a kid myself. Fathers, we follow what we learn from our own dads -- even if we swore we wouldn't. But, if you let him, God's will work on you.

BATEMAN

I didn't come here for a sermon. Rev.

NEIL

But you still came. You heard of the Israelites?

BATEMAN

Not into made-up stories.

Neil dodges a right from Bateman and counters with a kidney punch.

NEIL

Four hundred years they were slaves to the Pharaoh. A harsh, ruthless man. A god-king. Do the wrong thing and --

Neil attempts to make a cutting motion across his throat.

NEIL (CONT'D)

Moses takes them to the mountain to meet God. God calls from the mountain, 'Leave your sacrifices behind, meet me face-to-face.'

INT. BATEMAN RESIDENCE, SITTING ROOM - FLASHBACK

Katherine lunges forward and Black lets go of Tyler to smack her powerfully. Then --

Bateman lies on the ground, his face reflects in growing pool of blood on the gloss black tiles.

He locks gaze with his son, who's shivering with terror under the couch.

Back to --

PRESENT

NEIL

But they're afraid. Terrified.  
They're used to the pharaoh. "If we  
do the wrong thing we'll die."

They resume boxing.

So they come up with a solution.  
Moses, you go up and meet with God.  
Then tell us all the rules.

Breaks God's heart. Because people  
aren't made for laws. We were made  
for him.

Making promises to yourself, it  
doesn't work. You can't control  
yourself, any more than you can  
control the drought or the floods  
or the fires.

Neil drops his guard, he has had enough.

But face up to him. He's not a  
harsh father. He will heal you from  
the inside.

INT. EXCHANGE HOTEL, ROOM - NIGHT

The light is off. Bateman looks out the window. Tara runs across the yard.

She's at the door.

TARA

Come on.

BATEMAN

Where are you taking me?

TARA  
To show you something.

EXT. EXCHANGE HOTEL, ROOF - NIGHT

Bateman and Tara stand under a never-ending expanse of stars, the roof they are standing on, and each other.

BATEMAN  
I've never ...

TARA  
Never seen stars before?

BATEMAN  
Not like this. You barely even see the stars at night where I'm from. Do you do this every night.

TARA  
I used to sneak out and go shooting with the boys. But Dad put a stop to that.

Tara loses herself in the beauty of the sky.

BATEMAN  
What are you thinking?

TARA  
When I was twelve, Mum got really sick and had to go away to hospital. She left me a book. I promised myself I wouldn't read it until she came back.

BATEMAN  
What book was it?

TARA  
I never opened it.  
(beat)  
It's sad to think she died alone without the stars shining for her.

BATEMAN  
What was she like?

TARA  
Nice. She told me stories every night until I fell asleep. I tried to remember them after she left. But they were all in bits in my mind. So I pretended the stars were talking to me, that each one told me a different tale.

She points off into the sky.

TARA (CONT'D)

That one there, "The tale of the Fisherman and the Dragon." And that one, "The tale of the Princess's Gown."

BATEMAN

They all have a story?

TARA

I thought that if I found the star with the right story, I would find her.

BATEMAN

What about that one there?

TARA

She leans close. Which one?

BATEMAN

The big yellow one.

TARA

That one, the "Tale of the King's Wood."

BATEMAN

What's it about?

TARA

I'll tell you later.

BATEMAN

You're making it up.

She smiles and turns her attention back to the sky.

TARA

Remember when you asked if my father hurt me?

Bateman looks at her.

TARA (CONT'D)

Did your father hurt you? Is that why you asked?

BATEMAN

I never knew my father.

TARA

My father is all I know.



INT. EXCHANGE HOTEL, BAR - NEXT DAY

No-one attends the bar, so Bateman, jacket over arm, leaves his key and some cash on the counter. He turns to leave.

BEC

Not leaving without saying goodbye,  
I hope.

BATEMAN

I have one more thing to wrap up,  
then --

Tara's at the back door to the laundry.

BEC

Hold on a moment.

Bec opens the back door for Tara. He can hear them talking

BEC (CONT'D)

Well I'm glad you're here. What  
made you finally decide to stay?

TARA

I couldn't leave Dad. He's the only  
family I've got.

BEC

Don't be silly. You're one of us  
now. Make sure you work hard, do as  
I say, you'll pick it up.

TARA

Thanks.

Tara starts folding laundry. Bateman puts on his jacket and Bec re-enters.

BEC

(to Bateman)

Sorry, young Tara's first day.  
Reminds me of myself when I was her  
age. My step-dad liked to drink. My  
boyfriends liked to hit. So I  
fought back. Used whatever I had.  
Now I'm the one in charge.

Bateman and Tara make eye contact. Tara looks resigned.

BEC (CONT'D)

Don't go without saying good-bye.

EXT. SYMONDS' YARD - SOON AFTER

Bateman looks at Tara through the back door, folding laundry. He makes the final decision and heads toward Old Man Symonds' backdoor.

INT. SYMONDS' HOUSE, KITCHEN - IMMEDIATELY AFTER

Bateman enters the kitchen. Old pots and pans. Electric appliances abandoned mid-repair.

Then into --

LOUNGE ROOM

A lone recliner occupies the middle of the room, facing a wall full of VHS tapes, old records and a stack of players, stereo systems and amps.

Bateman pulls back the curtain and, through the neighbour's window sees Neil vacuuming the youth centre.

A thump comes from another room.

Then to --

HALLWAY

It's dark and the floorboards creak underneath. Bateman gently pushes open one of the several half-open doors. He continues. A burst of static comes from a two-way radio as it automatically scans through the channels.

In the next door he sees --

TARA'S ROOM

Tangled sheets on a collapsing single-bed, dirty jeans and grease-stained t-shirts, car magazines. A shelf high on the wall supports a couple of plush toys, a set of car keys, a leather-bound book and a polaroid photo. Bateman's hand passes over the keys and the book. He takes the photo to look at it. Tara, when she was young, and her mother. Dead branches scrape against the window.

The two-way momentarily interrupts with a jumbled conversation.

Bateman follows the noise into --

## THE WORKSHOP

Empty apart from all the radio equipment. The computer screens are still lit. The radio picks up unintelligible voices amongst the static. Painted window panes darken the room.

SYMONDS (O.S.)

What took you so long?

MACARTHUR SYMONDS, 60s, bulky, dressed in a throwback to the 70s, stands menacingly in the shadows. He offers a chair to Bateman. The metal legs scrape against the floor.

Bateman is expressionless.

SYMONDS (CONT'D)

Have it your way.

Symonds sits, his face in the half-light.

Bateman inspects his face. Symonds is increasingly uncomfortable.

BATEMAN

You're not like Aunt Sue said.

SYMONDS

That was a lifetime ago. Come here into the light. Let me look at you.

Bateman hesitates. Then takes a step forward. The floor creaks.

Symonds eyes all the details about his son.

BATEMAN

So?

Symonds has an opinion, but changes the topic.

SYMONDS

So, you're a lawyer? I always knew you'd grown up smart.

BATEMAN

But what do you see?

SYMONDS

You sure you want to go there?

Bateman stands there.

SYMONDS (CONT'D)

Okay then.

Symonds rises and opens the curtains. He considers his son.

SYMONDS (CONT'D)

Proud stance. Strong, but not military. Those eyes. You've seen the world. Like me. Where does a successful lawyer travel too? India? Singapore? China?

And not just seen the world. Experienced it. The sights, the sounds ... The pleasures.

Bateman is uncomfortable.

SYMONDS (CONT'D)

I was in the Navy. I know what happens in South East Asia.

Continues inspecting and sees the scar above Bateman's right eye.

SYMONDS (CONT'D)

And the evils.

Out of reflex, Bateman takes a step back out of the light.

SYMONDS (CONT'D)

What's the problem? Came here for the truth, and now you don't like it.

BATEMAN

No.

SYMONDS

No. That's right. You didn't come here for the truth. You came here for my approval.

BATEMAN

No.

SYMONDS

Yes. Thirty years and all this time you've been wondering if you live up to your father.

BATEMAN

No.

SYMONDS

Yes. Yes you have. Admit it. You came here because you wanted to know if you were as good as your old man.

BATEMAN

No. I came here to know that I was nothing like my old man.

SYMONDS

But you are. You are everything  
like me.

BATEMAN

And nothing like my mother?

SYMONDS

You leave her out of this.

BATEMAN

Standing right in front of you was  
someone you beat down and tore to  
shreds --

SYMONDS

She left me.

BATEMAN

She died!

SYMONDS

She left me!

TARA

No, Dad. She died.

Tara stands in the doorway. She hasn't been there long.

TARA (CONT'D)

Dad, she died.

She looks at Bateman.

TARA (CONT'D)

What are you doing here?

SYMONDS

Say hello to your brother.

Everything races through her mind. She turns to Symonds.

TARA

You knew the whole time?

SYMONDS

He wanted to take you away.

Tara turns to Bateman.

TARA

You knew too.

BATEMAN

I didn't come to take you anywhere.  
I didn't even know about you.

TARA

You can't be here anymore.

Reluctantly, Bateman leaves.

TARA (CONT'D)

And I can't be here anymore either.

She leaves.

Symonds smirks bitterly. He sees something on the floor. He picks it up. A Polaroid of his daughter and her mother.

INT. YOUNG ROBBO'S SMASH REPAIRS- SOON AFTER

Bateman knocks on Young Robbo's office door. Young Robbo looks past Bateman at Tara in her yard throwing clothes and boxes in her caravan.

YOUNG ROBBO

What's going on there?

BATEMAN

Got my keys?

He hands him the keys. Bateman snatches them.

YOUNG ROBBO

Don't have to be a jerk about it.

Bateman puts his sunglasses on. Emotionless.

INT. BMW - SOON AFTER

Bateman drives past Tara as she packs the car.

Bec hangs laundry on the line. She walks out to meet him before he drives past.

BEC

Leaving without saying goodbye?  
Lucky I saw you. Forgot your  
briefcase. I just sent my son up to  
get it.

BATEMAN

You have a son?

BEC

Spends weekends with Dad. Here he  
is.

Bateman has seen him before. He lowers his sunglasses

RORY HARRISON, 9, same kid from the schoolyard who shot Bateman with his finger. He hands Bateman the briefcase through the window.

BEC (CONT'D)  
Rory, use your manners.

Rory extends his hand.

Bateman remembers:

MONTAGE

- Rory raising his hand to Bateman
- The chant about the party on the hill and taking the gun

Bateman looks at Bec and starts to put it all together in his mind.

- Bec suggesting Old Man Symonds might be responsible for the death of the lawyer
- Bec saying that he checked out
- Tara saying he didn't check out
- Maureen saying Bec protects her girls
- Bec telling Tara she's family now.

Back to --

PRESENT

BEC (CONT'D)  
You should really stay for lunch.

Puts his glasses up.

BATEMAN

Sure. Let me take care of one thing  
and I'll be back.

EXT. DONGA IMMEDIATELY AFTER

Bateman almost panics as he knocks on Maureen's door. No answer, leaves to knock on Erin's door, but Maureen answers, she's naked but for a flimsy sarong.

MAUREEN  
Darryl, what is it?

BATEMAN  
If I was to say there was a party  
on the hill where would --

BUTTON (O.S.)

Get in here and put your arse back  
on my face, Bec is charging me by  
the hour.

He appears shirtless in the doorway and puts his hand up  
Maureen's sarong.

BATEMAN

Never mind. Didn't know you had  
company.

Maureen watches Bateman go.

MAUREEN

(to Button)  
How long before he arrives.

BUTTON

Should be soon.

MAUREEN

Call Bec and tell her to hurry him  
up.

EXT. PAYPHONE - SOON AFTER

The Beamer screeches as it u-turns in front of the payphone.  
Then --

INT. PAYPHONE

Bateman has the receiver to his face, and holds Sarge's  
business card in his hand.

VOICE MAIL

You have reached Mt Damien Police  
Station. We are currently  
unattended. If a crime is currently  
in progress, please dial triple-o.  
Otherwise leave a message after the  
tone.

BATEMAN

Sarge, it's Darryl Bateman. I think  
I know what happened to Ryan  
Chapel. You can contact me on ...

His phone has no service and he can't leave a message through  
the hotel.

BATEMAN (CONT'D)

Crap.



EXT. SYMONDS' YARD - SOON AFTER

Bateman drives up in his car. Tara fills the Holden with fuel from a jerry can. As he arrives the tank overflows and fuel spills on the ground.

BATEMAN  
Tara, get in.

TARA  
Fuck off. I don't need your help.

She puts the lid back on the can.

TARA (CONT'D)  
But I need yours. I think I know what happened to Ryan Chapel.

She throws the jerrycan in the back seat.

INT. BMW, SPEEDING ALONG THE HIGHWAY - SOON AFTER

TARA  
The turn-off is about five kays past the roadworks. Then turn left.

BATEMAN  
Are you sure this would be the hill where they would take him?

TARA  
You're kidding me. Do you see any other hills?

EXT. ROADWORKS - SOON AFTER

A ROAD CREW lays black bitumen. Mullet works at his water truck as the Beamer sprays gravel and the road turns to dirt.

BATEMAN (V.O.)  
According to Aunt Sue, he had this charming smile that flashed like sunshine.

EXT. BEACH PARK

RED, 20s, biker, bald head, long red beard. Stands on the grassy headland looking out at the people on a popular beach.

BATEMAN (V.O.)  
But it masked a temper that smouldered like a boiler.

He's listening to someone on the phone.

The phone gets passed GREY 50s who take walks over to a man sitting at a park bench eating fish and chips out of a styrofoam container. Grey whispers in the man's ear who turns to take the phone.

BATEMAN (V.O.)  
And whenever the pressure valve  
blew--

It's Black. He listens to the voice on the phone, checks the time on his watch and nods his head.

BATEMAN (V.O.)  
--all that anger exploded in  
mother's direction.

INT. GUNROOM

Red slings a heavy chain around his shoulder, and puts a revolver in the back of his pants.

BATEMAN (V.O.)  
Fractured ulna, broken collar bone.  
And a cheekbone that was smashed  
into two pieces.

Grey puts a shotgun and ammunition in a sports bag and a bowie knife in the top pocket of his vest.

BATEMAN (V.O.)  
Finally, she had enough. It was the  
coldest winter on record. About mid-  
night. With one good arm, she  
stuffed all she owned into a bag  
filled with baby food and nappies.

Black wraps his shotgun and pistol in a blanket.

BATEMAN (V.O.)  
With a sock full of small-change,  
she put me in the back seat of a  
Silvertop cab, and sent me out of  
state.

They put on their helmets, kick-start their bikes.

EXT. HIGHWAY - DAY

They shoot out like bullets onto the highway.

BATEMAN (V.O.)  
Anyway, that's what Aunt Sue said.

EXT. THE HILL - LATER

The car door is open and Bateman looks up towards the top of the hill. The grey sky looms. Tara gets out of the passenger seat.

BATEMAN

Stay here.

Tara pushes right past him. He follows her up the rocky slope.

Then, at --

THE TOP OF THE HILL

Strong winds blow dust in their faces.

BATEMAN

There's nothing here.

Tara bends down. She wipes the dust off a rock near the edge of a ravine, revealing a dark splatter stain.

BATEMAN (CONT'D)

What is it?

Tara edges toward ravine. A gust almost pushes her down. She peers down.

Bateman pushes past her into --

THE RAVINE

It's an almost impossible climb down. Rocks scuttle past Bateman's head as Tara follows him. It's quiet.

At the bottom, lying on the top of the sand is a rifle. Tara picks it up and check its condition. There's a spent shell in the chamber. The magazine is almost full. It seems to be in good condition. She looks up between the cliff-faces to the top of the hill. The rifle fell a long way. But it's been shielded from the elements.

BATEMAN

Look.

There it is, a hand, lifeless, poking out from behind a rock. They exchange glances. Bateman inspects the body. And finds something in a pocket. Tara puts the rifle down and reads the note Bateman passes her

"I've changed my mind. But we have to go now. Meet me at the hill as soon as you can.

Tara."

There is a mud map on the back.

TARA

That's not my handwriting.

There is a voice calling out. They climb through a hole to --

THE BOTTOM OF THE HILL

Bateman and Tara emerge near where they parked.

Sarge is there.

SARGE

I got your voicemail. I've come to tell you there's a storm approaching. We need to get back into town now.

BATEMAN

We found something.

THE BOTTOM OF THE RAVINE

SARGE

I've got to say, when I heard your message, it sounded a little crazy.

He approaches the body.

SARGE (CONT'D)

And you think Bec did this?

BATEMAN

My guess is Ryan saw something or overheard Bec talking. Threatened to tell the authorities about her underage prostitution ring.

He bends down to inspect the body. Tara watches over his shoulder.

SARGE

Could Bec really do this though?

BATEMAN

Not on her own, she needed help. Probably Maureen to hand him the note and lure him out here. Someone else to pull the trigger.

SARGE

Interesting theory.

With the point of a stick, Sarge turns over the hand. Tara sees the watch on Sarge's wrist -- and the one missing from Ryan's.

EXT. EXCHANGE HOTEL, ROOF - FLASHBACK

TARA

Stop looking at your watch. I know it's fancy, but look at those stars.

RYAN

It's just that it's getting late. My God, you're right! These stars are beautiful! I could die happy.

Back to --

PRESENT

TARA

That watch ...

Sarge without turning, looks at his watch and the wrist he stole it from.

TARA (CONT'D)

... I've seen it before.

She looks to Bateman.

Sarge slowly reaches for his sidearm.

BATEMAN

Take that pistol, but take it slowly.

Bateman points the rifle at Sarge.

Sarge turns carefully takes his pistol with his thumb and forefinger, and tosses it in the sand.

SARGE

You even know how to use a gun?

Tara picks up the pistol and removes the safety.

BATEMAN

No, but she does.

TARA

Hands behind your head. Turn around and count to fifty.

INT. SYMONDS' HOUSE, WORKSHOP - SAME TIME

Symonds uses a soldering-iron on a broken toaster. The image on the computer monitor behind him shows an oncoming storm. The radio chatters in the background.

He turns up the volume. Next to the button is the photo of Tara and her mother.

Symonds stares at the photo. Smoke swirls from the soldering iron.

Then --

TARA'S ROOM

Symonds places the photo back on the shelf beside the book. He has never noticed the book before. He picks it up and turns it over in his hands. He flicks through the book from the back to the front. All the pages are blank. But there is one more page, the front one, and on that page a note, elegantly handwritten:

"For Tara, my last dream is for you to live yours."

Tears fall on the page.

BACK DOOR

Symonds hesitates before putting his hand on the doorknob.

EXT. SYMONDS YARD

Symonds throws the book on the passenger seat of the Holden. He sees the jerrycan in the back seat.

He opens the bonnet takes a solinoid from his pocket, and swaps it with the one in the car. He reaches in and turns the key in the ignition. It starts perfectly first time. He closes the bonnet, turns the car off.

The back door of the house slams closed.

The keys dangle in the ignition.

BOTTOM OF THE HILL

Bateman and Tara scramble to where the two cars are parked. Tara gets straight in the passenger side of the beamer. Bateman pulls the keys from Sarge's ignition and throws the keys out into the scrub. Lightning flashes silently on the horizon.

## BOTTOM OF THE RAVINE

Sarge kneels next to the body with his hands behind his head.

SARGE

Forty-nine, fifty. Ready or not,  
here I come.

## BOTTOM OF THE HILL

Sarge breathes heavily as he climbs up through the hole and his boots crunch through the spinifex and gigdee rocks.

When he reaches his car he sees the BMW speeding down the hillside in the distance.

He pokes his head in the window. The ignition is empty. Not on the floor. Not on the dash. He smiles, picks up a gidgee rock. Which way would he throw the keys? Opposite direction to the way home. He throws the rock. We see it land a few feet away from the keys.

## EXT. HIGHWAY - LATER

Bateman and Bec zoom down the highway.

BATEMAN

It's not safe to go near the hotel.  
My phone is out of range. I'll pull  
up at the phone-booth.

TARA

Dial emergency. Got it.

Bateman slows down as he sees three dots blocking the highway ahead of him.

TARA (CONT'D)

What is that?

BATEMAN

I don't like ...

Bateman sees three bikers standing in the middle of the road. Their bikes are on the shoulder. They brandish shotguns.

The car slows to a crawl as Bateman tries to figure out what is going on. Red and Grey aim their weapons.

BATEMAN (CONT'D)

Get down.

He pushes her down in her seat.

TARA

Let go. Who are they?

Bateman puts the car in reverse and speeds back as fast as he can.

BATEMAN  
Hired thugs.

TARA  
What do they want?

BATEMAN  
Me. But you're not safe either. Is there another way back to town?

TARA  
Does this car have four-wheel-drive?

BATEMAN  
Keep your head down until I tell you.

He puts the car in first gear and hits the gas.

HIGHWAY

Black nods to Red. Who scrambles to kick-start his bike.

CAR

Tara leans into the back, pulling out the rifle.

BATEMAN  
What the hell?

TARA  
They'll be in range before we are.

BATEMAN  
Get the hell down!

Bateman can't do anything.

Tara fires a shot at Grey, who runs for cover. She fires again, aiming at Black. The shot sizzles past Grey's head, who returns with a blast from the shotgun, then reloads.

Red kickstarts his bike.

Tara ducks her head down into Bateman's lap. Black steps off the road. He aims at the passenger door and waits until the last minute.

Bang!

Tara squeals.



BATEMAN (CONT'D)  
Are you all right?

Tara looks back.

TARA  
Keep driving, they're coming.

To --

RED'S P.O.V.

Pistol in his hand, but the dirt road is too rough to let go of the handlebars.

Bateman's car zooms through the unmanned road works. As soon as Red hits the bitumen he opens fire.

INT. MULLET'S TRUCK - SAME TIME

Well it wasn't totally unmanned. Mullet scoffs down a cream bun on his lunch break, listening to the two-way radio, and reading Women's Day.

Bateman's car zooms past, followed by Red's hog and gunshots.

MULLET  
What the?

He chokes down a cream bun and reaches for the two-way handset.

INT. SYMONDS' HOUSE, WORKSHOP - SAME TIME

Symonds stands in the darkness, cigarette smoke swirling around him, listening to radio chatter.

He brings the cigarette to his mouth but --

MULLET(TWO-WAY)  
That lawyer in his black BMW. It was -- bang, bang, bang. And it looked like he had that Symonds girl with him.

-- pauses.

DRIVER (TWO-WAY)  
Holy shit, you were right, they just passed me now.

MULLET (TWO-WAY)  
Where are you?

DRIVER (TWO-WAY)  
About 10 kays coming out of town.  
They zoomed right past.

THE HIGHWAY

Red fires a volley of shots at Bateman's car in the distance.

THE CAR

The Fuel gauge reaches empty.

BATEMAN  
We need fuel. Find a phone. Dial  
triple-o then -- where's a good  
place to hide?

The back window of the car cracks.

BATEMAN (CONT'D)  
Don't worry I'll get some distance  
on him.

EXT. PAYPHONE - SOON AFTER

Bateman screeches the car to a halt.

In the --

CAR

BATEMAN  
Take this with you.

He hands her the pistol.

BATEMAN (CONT'D)  
Where will you hide?

TARA  
Over there.

She points to the cattle trailer yard. She stumbles as she gets out of the car.

Bateman doesn't notice a dark red patch where Tara was sitting.

EXT. ROADHOUSE - SOON AFTER

The pump ticks over as Bateman fuels his car up.

INT. PAYPHONE

OPERATOR  
State your emergency. Fire,  
Ambulance or Police.

TARA  
Police.

ROADHOUSE

BATEMAN sees Red approach down the highway. He drops to the ground with his back to the rear wheel. Right beside the shotgun holes in the passenger door.

OPERATOR (O.S.)  
State your address.

PAYPHONE

TARA  
Marakuna. I'm at the payphone in  
the main street.

Red sees the car parked at the roadhouse and slows down. He pulls up almost next to the payphone.

OPERATOR  
What is the nature of your  
emergency?

Tara panics at the sight of Red and ducks down out of Red's view.

A gale blows. Dust whips up into Red's face.

TARA  
(whispers)  
I can't talk. One of them is here.  
They have guns. The others will get  
here soon.

Red reloads and keeps his eyes fixed on Bateman's car.

Tara sneaks a look through the payphone window to see Red get out his shotgun.

OPERATOR  
Can you describe your assailants?

Tara knows that Bateman is out in the open.

She takes the pistol that's tucked into her jeans. She has a bloody wound on her hip. She reloads and puts the gun on her other side.

TARA  
(to operator)  
I've got to go.

The handset dangles.

#### HIGHWAY

Red gets off his bike and heads toward the roadhouse with his shotgun aimed.

Behind him, Tara sprints out of the phone booth toward the cattle trailers. Half-way there, she turns around.

TARA  
Hey! Hey! Over here!

Red turns to see Tara.

She sprints flat out toward the --

#### FIRST CATTLE TRAILER

Dirt clumps burst and dust flies as she slides feet-first under the empty trailer. She hides behind one of the wheels.

#### ROADHOUSE

Bateman looks up through the windows to the highway. He sees the other two bikers coming down the highway.

He pumps gas for as long as he can, and jumps in the driver's seat. He scatters loose gravel as he does a u-turn back toward the cattle trailers.

Back to --

#### FIRST CATTLE TRAILER

She calms her breathing to hear if she is being followed.

She peeks between cattle rails, a full view of the highway. Red is nowhere to be seen.

She leans her head out further.

Still no sign.

She winces and hobbles further back behind another cattle trailer. A blood spot moistens the dust.

Red sneaks silently around the back of the first trailer.

He crouches down and inspects the dust at his feet. There is a spot of blood.

He finds another.

He follows the trail to --

#### SECOND CATTLE TRAILER

Tara creeps along, crouching behind every wheel she comes to. She reaches the end and pokes her head around the corner.

Bateman is gone.

She hears movement behind her. She gets out the pistol. And edges into a narrow gap between two trailers. But it's too small to fit through. She's stuck.

Red follows a trail of black spots on the ground. He reaches the gap that Tara squeezed through. He looks in the gap. There's blood there. But no Tara. It's too small for him, so he goes around.

On the other side, he rejoins the trail of black spots. They are closer now. He raises his shotgun. She is close. Before his eyes, another black spot appears.

And another

And another.

Raindrops ping on the metal trailers. Movement ahead. He raises his weapon and lurches forward.

Tara drops down behind him from on top of the trailers. He turns and a blast rings out.

Tara crouches on the ground holding her side. Blood seeps through her fingers.

Red, he's on his back. Blood spurts and gurgles from a gunshot wound in his throat. It was him that was shot.

It pains Tara to stand, but she manages.

A loose tarp flaps in the breeze.

She heads toward home.

Bateman pulls out in front of Black and Grey.

He swerves to run them off the road but they avoid him. He tries to outrun them, but they are too agile. Bateman and Black are eye-to-eye as they pass the hotel.

Black pulls out a sawn-off shot gun.

Bateman slams the brakes. Grey comes off his bike.

Black throws the tail-end of the bike around to come face-to-face with Bateman as he screeches to a halt in front of the supermarket.

Bateman puts the car in reverse -- but too late.

Black raises his sawn-off and blasts three times through Bateman's window.

Glass fills the air.

Rain falls to the ground.

EXT. YOUTH CENTRE - MOMENTS LATER

Grey recovers from the fall, pulls out a Bowie knife and begins to make his way toward the car.

NEIL (O.S.)

Have you ever tried offering  
forgiveness to the one that you  
love?

Confused, Red turns to see Neil in the shadows.

NEIL (CONT'D)

You want to comfort them, but they  
refuse to come to you.

RED

What?

Neil steps out of the shadow.

NEIL

Remember when we talked about it,  
how you wondered if is it better to  
leave them to their own devices?

Fast as lightning Neil grabs Grey's wrist. Neil has the advantage of surprise, but it is no match for Grey's size. Grey forces the knife toward Neil's face. But before he knows it, Neil re-directs this force and the knife lodges in Grey's side.

But Grey doesn't give up. He raises his hand to strike again. But Neil twists and pulls Grey to the ground. Neil has Grey in a headlock, legs wrapped around his chest and arms choking his throat.

EXT. SUPERMARKET - MOMENTS LATER

Black opens Bateman's door, and pulls him out by his lapels.

Back in front of the --

## YOUTH CENTRE

By sheer strength Grey raises his knife and brings it down on Neil's leg -- his wooden leg. It glances off and stabs Grey in the chest.

Grey continues to struggle as he slowly weakens.

Meanwhile, in front of the --

## SUPERMARKET

Bateman's face bleeds with small cuts. Black turns him around in mid-air.

BLACK

I'm getting sick of you.

He throws Bateman through the grocery store window. The window separates into a million shards and the storefront mannequins topple into pieces.

BLACK (CONT'D)

This time you won't be getting up.

Slowly, Bateman steadies himself amongst the rubble. He struggles to his feet.

Now Black is angry. He throws his burley fist at Bateman.

In an instant, Bateman ducks. In his hands he has the leg of a mannequin. He brings the corner of it down on the back of Black's head.

Knocked out cold, Black thumps to the ground.

Neil catches his breath, and leans against the car in the rain. He sees Bateman wielding the leg with bloodied fists.

NEIL

Nice one. I'll call the cops.

Bateman drops the leg.

BATEMAN

Tara.

He heads back toward the cattle trailers.

## EXT. EXCHANGE HOTEL

Police lights flash. A police officer in rain gear stands at the front door. He shines a torch in Bateman's exhausted and bleeding face.

BATEMAN

Thank God. I need your help. A girl, Tara --

POLICE OFFICER

She's inside.

Relief turns to horror as the officer pulls back his hood.

It's Sarge.

Bateman looks at the door.

SARGE

Upstairs.

Bateman ascends the stairs.

... tears

... mixed with blood

... mixed with rain

He pushes the door to the upstairs sitting room.

THE WORKSHOP

Symonds watches the hotel from his window.

POLICE SCANNER

HQ to Mt Damien mobile. Two backup units currently on route to Marakuna. Female, possibly teens to early twenties threatened by multiple unidentified armed assailants. Please respond.

He watches Sarge take the keys out of his car, check his weapon and enter the hotel with gun drawn.

THE SITTING ROOM

Bec stands at the far end of the room, right next to Tara who sits in a chair.

Button holds a pistol to her head.

Maureen stands nearby.

BEC

I welcome you into my town.

Bateman continues forward.



BEC (CONT'D)

I let you live in my home. And you try to steal one of my girls.

BATEMAN

Let her go.

BEC

All this, I fought for this. I gave everything for this, and you want to bring it all down.

BATEMAN

Take me, just let her go.

Bec nods to Button.

Meanwhile, in --

SYMOND'S BACKYARD

Symonds gets in the Holden and turns on the ignition.

SITTING ROOM

Bateman steps forward.

BATEMAN

Now let her go.

Sarge appears behind Bateman with weapon drawn.

BEC

Don't do it here.

MAUREEN

You said you'd let Tara go.

BEC

Don't be stupid.

Bateman, looks at the water pooling at his feet. He remembers staring into his son's eyes.

Before he realises it, Bateman runs toward Bec and knocks her into the wall.

OUTSIDE

The Holden is out the front of the Exchange Hotel, motor running.

Symonds stands, soaking wet in the doorway of the Exchange Hotel. He rubs his hands together for warmth and then lights up a cigarette. He takes a long draw from the cigarette.

He looks at the jerrycan lying sideways at the bottom of the steps inside the front door of the hotel.

He takes another long draw and looks at the cigarette.

He tosses it into the spilled fuel and walks away.

Flames flicker.

#### SITTING ROOM

Button pistol whips Bateman repeatedly on the back of the head.

Tara throws herself onto Bateman to protect him.

BEC  
(to Sarge)  
Don't just stand there.

SARGE  
Wait, something's wrong.

Sarge peeks back down the stairs.

SARGE (CONT'D)  
Holy shit! We're on fire.

BUTTON  
What do you mean?

#### THE STAIRS

Sarge pushes Bec out of the sitting room door into the heat and the smoke. Bec and Button follow.

BEC  
(to Button)  
Here's the key, lock that door.

#### SITTING ROOM

Tara helps Bateman up. Bateman checks the door but it's locked.

TARA  
No, this way.

She stands at the window.

#### ROOF

They race through the rain and the smoke, across the top of the roof.

EXT. EXCHANGE HOTEL - SOON AFTER

They climb down the side of the hotel. Tara almost slips. She looks at her hand. It's covered in blood.

BATEMAN

Are you okay?

BEC

We need to keep going.

They continue climbing down until they get to the external stairs. They run out to the street. They look back at the hotel. It's on fire.

Black is there. He sees them. They have a head-start so they run for Bateman's car. Black gets in the Holden.

By the time they get in Bateman's car, Black has rammed them with the Holden, a spray of sparks and water.

INT. BATEMAN'S CAR - RIGHT AFTER

Bateman spins the tyres and speeds along the main street, heading out of town, the windscreen a furious mess of wiper-blades, cracked glass and spraying water.

Through the back window he sees headlights bouncing as lightning cracks.

The car loses power.

TARA

Faster, he's catching up.

BATEMAN

I can't.

The oil light flashes.

TARA

Bloody European cars.

Black catches up. The bonnet of the Holden lines up with the back window of the BMW.

They see Chinaman's Creek, a dip, that descends into a narrow one-lane bridge. Bateman floors the throttle and the car twists in the air as it careens onto the bridge.

But Black hasn't slowed down. He shoves the rear of the BMW with his grill.

Bateman and Tara lose sight of the road, the engine revs and they fly off the bridge.

They lurch forward violently. Darkness explodes as the airbags deploy.

CHINAMAN CREEK

The BMW is embedded nose-first into the side of the creek-bed. The creek slowly fills as ground water gushes down it's banks.

In the --

CAR

Tara thumps Bateman's shoulder.

TARA

Get up you lazy bastard.

He stirs.

She pulls his door handle and braces her back against the passenger door. She pushes him out of the car.

He slides out into the mud, semi-conscious.

TARA (CONT'D)

Boost me.

He stands. She clambers up the eroding river bank and lies on the ground, reaching her hands down to offer him a lift.

Behind her, the sound of the Holden pulling up. Headlights switch off and the engine cuts out, but she keeps her grip.

When Bateman clears the edge, he stands --

eye level with Black.

Black firmly holds the back of Tara's hair and pins her back with his knee.

Black pushes her away, and she gets up and thumps at his chest with both hands together, but she is just too small.

Black backhands Tara across the face and sends her flying.

This is the showdown. Bateman gets in his boxer's stance, breath spraying the rainwater dripping down his face.

Black grins and advances.

Black throws a hay-maker at Bateman who ducks and throws two powerful kidney-punches into his side. Bateman continues to dodge Black and land blows of his own. Black doesn't flinch. Finally, he throws a right hook at Bateman's head. Bateman blocks, but it still knocks him to the ground.

Bateman lies on the edge of the eroding river bank, a torrent of water below him.

In a moment, Black straddles Bateman, thumbs pressed into his throat.

Bateman pushes against his hands, but it's futile.

The bank crumbles.

Tara jumps on Black, links her hands around his throat and pulls back as hard as she can.

Black reaches around and pulls her to the side. With a powerful jab to the face, he sends her flying back.

Bateman covers his face as he is pummelled, reopening the wounds on his hands and face. Bateman is exhausted and a large chunk of mud falls away, leaving his shoulders unsupported.

Bateman, face up, exhausted, bloody, head leaning back and throat completely vulnerable.

Black raises his fist for one last skull-shattering blow.

Lightning flashes as Tara lifts the battery-operated grinder. With a shrieking whir, she swings the grinder in a huge arc, removing Black's raised fist.

Black rolls off Bateman, crying in agony.

She stands as the ground beneath Black crumbles and he disappears into the raging torrent.

The rain eases to a drizzle.

Bateman falls into the passenger seat of the Holden. He shivers as he half sits, half lies on the front seat. He binds his bleeding hands with white rags.

In front of his eyes, in curly writing on the glovebox, the badge showing the series name of a Holden EQ.

BATEMAN

Tara. What was the name of that story you were going to tell me?

Bateman is as pale as death.

TARA

The Tale of the King's Wood.

The badge reads: Kingswood.

BATEMAN

(coughs)

Yeah, that's it. Tell it to me.

TARA  
It's not finished yet.

The filaments of the headlights shine.

Tara turns the ignition, puts it in first gear, the engine  
revs, and gravel flies --

CUT to black.