

EXT. HOUSE - LATE AFTERNOON

The front of a decrepit weatherboard house. The driveway is scattered with lemons, though there is no sign of a lemon tree anywhere.

Ari's car, an aging Kingswood, pulls into the driveway, squashing and scattering lemons.

ARI steps out of the car, picks up a lemon and looks around for the tree. When she doesn't find it, she looks out at the street with some suspicion.

There is a sudden blast of the car horn. Ari jumps. Through the car window we see LUCINDA. She has climbed out of her booster seat and is standing in the driver's seat.

ARI

Lucinda!

Lucinda hits the horn again, this time in a sustained blast.

ARI (CONT'D)

Lucinda!

Ari goes to fetch her, but Lucinda is too quick. She is instantly out of the car and at the front door of the house.

LUCINDA

House!

She throws herself against the door, embraces it.

INT. HALLWAY - MORNING

The house is quite dark. The door opens and light floods in. LUCINDA enters, runs through to the back of the house. ARI enters, lingers.

ARI

Lucinda?

A long moment, then Lucinda suddenly emerges from the gloom.

LUCINDA

Lucinda!

She rushes past Ari and into the lounge room.

LUCINDA (CONT'D)

Lucinda!

INT. LOUNGEROOM - CONTINUOUS

Ari enters to find Lucinda in front of the gas heater.

ARI

Lucinda...

Lucinda rattles the heater.

LUCINDA

Lucinda! Lucinda!

ARI

Stop it!

She stops.

ARI (CONT'D)

Come here!

Lucinda goes to her. Ari takes her hands, tries to make eye contact.

ARI (CONT'D)

Daddy and I are having time out...

Without emotion Lucinda twists her hands free and runs to the hallway.

INT. KITCHEN - EARLY EVENING

Lucinda has found a raised piece of lino on the kitchen floor. She begins to tug at it until it resists and breaks. She grabs the end and tugs again. We soon realise that she has been doing this for a while and has pulled up quite a bit of the lino.

A shadow appears over her. We see that it is REX, her father, who is at the back door. He watches her.

Ari enters. She has obviously been asleep - she is bleary eyed and disoriented. She first sees the devastation.

ARI

Ah, Luce...

Lucinda bursts into tears, then Ari sees Rex.

ARI (CONT'D)

Christ!

(pause)

It's your daddy.

LUCINDA

Daddy!

She throws herself against the back door. Ari opens it for Rex.

LUCINDA (CONT'D)

Daddy!

She gives him a big hug, then breaks free and runs off.

LUCINDA (CONT'D)

Come and see!

ARI

What are you doing here?

He hands her instruction manuals for the television and video.

ARI (CONT'D)

You came all this way for these?

REX

You can't work anything without the manual.

He follows Lucinda.

Ari is still drowsy. She goes to the back door, opens it and looks out.

EXT. BACKYARD - EARLY EVENING

PAULINE from next door is in the overgrown backyard with her small dog. The dog is pooping. When it finishes, Pauline picks up the dog and wipes its bum with a tissue. She suddenly sees Ari.

PAULINE

I'm Pauline. This is Naana. You have a dog?

ARI

I'm renting.

PAULINE

The man who owned the house - he had a dog. Huge thing. Naana was terrified.

(pause)

It's a deceased estate.

ARI

What is?

PAULINE

Your house.

ARI

Did he die here?

PAULINE

Who knows.

ARI

I have a child.

PAULINE

Right...

ARI

I mean, your dog can't...

Pauline is obviously offended. She takes her dog back through a gap in the broken fence between the two properties.

INT. HALLWAY - EVENING

Rex is leaving. Ari is showing him out.

REX

I'm not letting my daughter live here. You can live where the fuck you like, but not her.

ARI

She doesn't know the difference.

REX

Come home.

ARI

This is my home now.

REX

She needs to get assessed. They told you.

ARI

They won't pay for it till she's five.

REX

I'll pay for it.

ARI

She needs to be left alone to be a kid.

She shuts the door on him and waits for him to leave.

INT. LOUNGEROOM - NIGHT

Ari and Lucinda are comfortable in front of the heater. Lucinda had been bathed and is wearing pyjamas and dressing gown. She is playing a puzzle.

We hear voices from outside. Ari stops to listen for a moment, then watches the way Lucinda plays.

ARI

When you were a baby?

LUCINDA

When you were a baby...

ARI

You used to scream and cry your lungs out...

LUCINDA

Your lungs out...?

ARI

Loud, I mean.

(long pause)

But then you'd just stop. And you'd listen. Do you remember?

LUCINDA

I want to go back to Warrandyte.

ARI

Do you remember?

LUCINDA

Daddy.

ARI

Your Nanna always said that you were with the ghosts. Do you remember, Luce?

LUCINDA

Want Nanna.

ARI

I've just realised - you still do that.

Lucinda stares at the wall.

ARI (CONT'D)

Where are you, Luce? Why won't you look at me?

Lucinda runs out of the room.

INT. LOUNGEROOM - NIGHT

It is quite late. Lucinda has been put to bed. There is a strong sense of aloneness as Ari sits in the middle of the floor attempting to connect the television and video player. She works in silence for a bit, but then activates the wrong button and the television loudly hisses to life

ARI

Shit!

She turns it off. Silence. She hears raucous laughter from outside. In the silence, the laughter sounds very close. Ari goes to the window, peers out. The sound of the laughter recedes.

Ari feels suddenly cold. She turns the heater up, turns and is startled to find Lucinda standing in the middle of the room.

ARI (CONT'D)

Why aren't you asleep?

LUCINDA

Want to go home.

ARI

This is home.

INT. BEDROOM - NIGHT

Darkness. Ari is in her bed. Lucinda is in her arms, fast asleep, but Ari is wide awake, listening.

There is a flash of headlights and the screech of tyres. We hear the thud of car doors slamming, and an angry male and female voice.

MALE

Fuck off!

FEMALE

I fucken love you!

MALE

Fuck...Off!

FEMALE

Well, fuck you!

The car screeches away.

FEMALE (CONT'D)

Fu-u-uck!!

ARI

(whisper)

What will she do?

A long pause, then Ari frees herself from Lucinda, gets out of bed, peers through the blind. We see the woman standing in the street. She appears to be passively waiting.

Ari begins to cry softly. She reaches for her dressing gown, moves towards the door, but hears the sound of the car returning. She goes back to the window.

We see the woman getting into a car. The car drives away calmly.

Ari gets back in to bed, wraps her arms around Lucinda, continues to cry softly.

INT. KITCHEN - MORNING

It is just before dawn. Blackbirds are singing, and there is some light just beginning to filter into the house.

We hear a tearing sound. Then we see Lucinda ripping up pieces of lino.

Ari enters. She is still very sleepy.

ARI

Lucinda. What are you doing?

Lucinda looks up at her. She stares at her mother for some time, but says nothing.

ARI (CONT'D)

Luce? What is it?

Lucinda turns and runs. Ari starts to take off after her, but when she puts her foot down on the spot where Lucinda was peeling the lino her foot goes straight through the floorboard.

ARI (CONT'D)

Shit!

INT. SHOPPING CENTRE - DAY

Ari is dragging Lucinda away from a coin-operated horse. Lucinda is screaming. Passersby are staring.

LUCINDA

Horse! I want the horse!

Ari is too tired to be angry. She shifts her shopping, picks Lucinda up, carries her away. She catches the eye of a passerby.

ARI

What?

The passerby looks away and keeps moving.

INT. LOUNGEROOM - EVENING

Ari and Lucinda are eating their dinner on the floor in front of the heater.

LUCINDA

Cat.

ARI

Hat.

Lucinda laughs. Each new rhyme seems to make her very happy.

LUCINDA

Button.

ARI

Mutton.

LUCINDA

Dinner.

ARI

Winner.

(pause)

It's hard being in a new house, isn't it. It's hard for Mummy too.

LUCINDA

Hard for Mummy? Daddy will fix it. Where's Daddy?

ARI

Baddy. Smaddy. Naddy.

Lucinda laughs.

ARI (CONT'D)

I'm not very good at rhymes.

LUCINDA

Dog.

ARI

Plog!

LUCINDA

Fight.

ARI

Expedite.

LUCINDA

Expedite?

ARI

Ex-pe-dite!

Lucinda gets up and runs out of the room with excitement.
We hear her running through the house.

LUCINDA
Expedite! Expedite! Expedite!
Expe-!

There is a sudden silence. Ari stops eating, listens.

ARI
Luce?
(long pause)
Lucinda?

There is dead silence. Ari gets up and begins to move through the house.

INT. HALLWAY - EVENING

The hallway is dark. Ari moves through it towards the kitchen. She is suddenly apprehensive.

INT. KITCHEN - EVENING

Ari enters the kitchen and finds Lucinda staring down into the dark hole in the floorboard where Ari's foot crashed through.

ARI
Oh, God.

Lucinda continues to stare. There is a long silence.

ARI (CONT'D)
I broke the floor, Luce. You
remember?

LUCINDA
Who is down there, Mummy?

ARI
What? Nobody is down there.
(pause)
Get away from it, Lucinda.

Lucinda doesn't react.

ARI (CONT'D)
I said - get away from it!

She drags Lucinda away from the hole. Lucinda screams.

ARI (CONT'D)

I'll fix it! I'll fucking fix it!

INT. KITCHEN - EVENING

A little later, Ari has hammer and nails and is finishing nailing a broken piece of weatherboard over the hole. The task is made difficult by Lucinda screaming and trying to get to the hole.

LUCINDA

Somebody down there!

ARI

There is nobody under there! What's the matter with you?

Ari pauses, tries to hug Lucinda. Lucinda pushes her away.

ARI (CONT'D)

Fuck off, then!

(pause)

Luce, I'm sorry. Mummy's a bit tired.

INT. LOUNGEROOM - NIGHT

Ari has fallen asleep on the couch. An instinct wakes her. She catches a half glimpse of Lucinda in her night clothes rushing past. Ari is too drowsy to react initially, and she goes back to sleep for a few moments, but then she jumps to her feet.

INT. LUCINDA'S ROOM - NIGHT

Ari enters, goes to the bed, find that Lucinda isn't there.

ARI

Luce?! Where are you?

She trips and stumbles her way towards the door.

We hear Lucinda calling from a long way away.

LUCINDA

Mummy! Mummy!

ARI

Luce, where are you?

EXT. BACKYARD - NIGHT

Ari stumbles about in the darkened backyard.

ARI
Lucinda, where are you?

LUCINDA
Mummy!

Lucinda sounds even further away than before. She is becoming hysterical.

ARI
Lucinda!

The dog next door starts barking. Pauline appears in her backyard.

PAULINE
Naana. Stop it.

ARI
Do you have a torch?

PAULINE
Naana - inside now.

ARI
Please..!

Pauline goes inside.

ARI (CONT'D)
Shit!

She keeps searching. She can't see her way around the yard. She stumbles. Lucinda continues to call, and Ari realises she is under the house. She finds the access point.

ARI (CONT'D)
Are you in there, Luce?

LUCINDA
Mummy.

There is suddenly a bright light in Ari's face. She looks up.

PAULINE

Naana's having a fit. I've had to shut her inside.

LUCINDA

I need your help, please.

PAULINE

You asked for the torch, so I'm here.

She shines the torch under the house. We see Lucinda wedged in a narrow crawlspace under where the kitchen would be. Lucinda screams.

ARI

It's alright, Luce. Mummy's here.

PAULINE

How did she end up under there?

EXT. UNDER THE HOUSE - NIGHT

Ari slides into the narrow space, begins to crawl towards Lucinda. Her shadow flickers across Lucinda as she crawls.

ARI

It's alright, Luce.

PAULINE

It's a hell of a place to find yourself.

LUCINDA

Mummy...

PAULINE

Did you have a fight or something?

ARI

Almost there, Sweetie.

LUCINDA

Mummy...I didn't find them. I looked, but maybe they went up into the house.

ARI

Maybe they did?

LUCINDA

Can we look?

PAULINE

What's she talking about?

ARI

Nothing. She's four.

PAULINE

Are you getting her out?

ARI

Luce, come on.

Lucinda is very frightened.

LUCINDA

If they're in the house, Mummy -
where will we go?

ARI

I don't know, Luce. I really don't
know.

INT. LOUNGEROOM - NIGHT

Lucinda is freshly bathed and comfortable in front of the
heater. Ari watches her.

ARI

I try to imagine what it's like to
be you.

LUCINDA

Will you be four, Mummy?

ARI

No.

Lucinda stares up at the ceiling. Ari watches her.

