

EPONA

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We have written this script with a message of coming together, Epona is a metaphor for where we are as a country – it's about what happens when cultures come together, when we stop turning away from our past and start facing it with honesty and compassion. The darkness in the story represents the parts of our history that are painful, things we've tried to bury or forget. But healing doesn't come from silence. It comes from connection, with each other, with the land, and with the stories that shape us. This film is about finding the courage to walk through that darkness together, so we can lead our children somewhere better – somewhere strong, united, and filled with light. It's made with deep respect for everyone's journey, and with hope that through story, we can build something true and lasting.



I'm dyslexic, so please don't take offence to any spelling or grammar errors.

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War drums pound like thunder across the vast, golden desert.

OLC (the most evil man on the planet), cloaked in black, with sharp features and blood-stained fingers, sits tall on a black Fresian horse. A CURRAWONG - DROCHAN (A strong Currawong with piercing yellow eyes and sharp claws) perches on his forearm, pecking at his torn skin.

Before him stands a wall of warriors, crouched low with black shields bearing a Currawong crest, swords raised above their heads.

Beside him, two warriors sit on anxious battle horses, hooves pawing at the sand.

Behind OLC, an army of men stretches into the distance, swords, spears, axes. Their armor is black, their cloaks draped like death, and helmets spiked like thorns.

OLC stares across the battlefield...

In the shimmering distance stands a golden army. Their leader, EPONA, (glows with golden skin, long white hair, and glimmering armor with her Cornucopia attached to her side). At her side, her soul-bound horse, CROITHE, (a magnificent golden mare with a white mane).

Behind them, their army waits, archers, swordsmen, cavalry. The air crackles with tension.

DAICHI (a strong, athletic woman in armour with long flowing hair, stained by battle) Stands tall beside her with her sword raised and ready for battle.

CROITHE stamps her foot, restless. Epona reaches out, stroking her neck. CROITHE turns to see EPONA sitting proudly on her back, EPONA leans down and whispers

EPONA

We always have each other.

Across the battlefield, OLK watches.

His jaw tightens.

DROCHAN shifts uneasily on his forearm.

OLK'S grip tightens around the reins.

A flicker passes across his face.

Gone as quickly as it came.

OLK
(to his warriors)
I want them brought to me alive.

The warriors nod.

OLC shakes away the pain and his eyes flick to rage. He lets out a savage scream.

OLK (CONT'D)
Attack.

The black army ROARS and CHARGES.

The sound of the army raw, charging forward in unison to attack.

Epina lifts her sword.

She and CROITHE gallop forward, leading the golden army. Both sides collide in a fury of steel, hooves, and blood.

EPONA leaps from CROITHE, cutting down a hulking enemy warrior. CROITHE lashes out, kicking a soldier off his feet, saving EPONA from an axe to the back.

But the golden army is overwhelmed. EPONA, panting, fights on, her blade drives into a soldier's stomach. She's fading.

She and CROITHE find themselves encircled, black-armoured warriors forming a wall of spears.

OLC steps into the circle, spear in hand, DROCHAN perched on his shoulder, its beak dripping red.

EPONA blows her Cornucopia. A haunting, powerful note rings out.

Amidst the chaos, DAICHI pushes through the crush of OLC's soldiers. Her blade slices with precision, but she's being held back, the enemy outnumber her.

DAICHI
(shouting)
EPONA!

She fights with everything she has, eyes locked on her commander, but the dark army swallows her path. She is being held back, she is forced to watch on helplessly.

EPONA and CROITHE are now alone.

OLK
Death would be too simple, what I
desire is pain.

He nods. His men throw ropes around CROITHE, dragging her to the ground.

EPONA
No, stop

EPONA fights to free her, but two giant warriors slam her to the ground, pinning her underfoot.

OLC raises his spear high above CROITHE.

EPONA (CONT'D)
Please, stop

She struggles, but can't break free.

OLK watches EPONA struggle.

She claws at the warriors holding her.

Desperate.

Terrified.

Willing to die for CROITHE.

For the briefest moment, OLC hesitates.

His eyes flick to CROITHE.

Then back to EPONA.

His grip tightens on the spear.

A moment passes.

OLC drives the spear into CROITHE'S Heart.

CROITHE lets out a final, piercing WHINNY. Light explodes from her body. A celtic pendant now sits where CROITHE'S body once was.

DROCHAN picks up the Celtic pendant in his beak and takes it to OLC. OLC strokes him.

OLC raises the Celtic pendant.

CROITHE'S golden light is sucked into the pendant, her soul trapped.

With a flash, OLC hurls it into the sky, streaking across the heavens like a shooting star.

Epona screams furiously and falls to her knees. Her golden light fades. She is broken.

OLC steps closer, stroking DROCHAN'S Feathers.

OLK
The pain of a broken heart is yours
to carry. Never again shall you
walk beside Croithe. Her soul shall
remain beyond your reach. You shall
wander this earth alone, for all
eternity.

EPONA glares up at OLC and with the last of her strength.

EPONA
I won't stop... until I have
destroyed you.

OLC studies her.

His expression unreadable.

OLK
You still don't understand.

He turns his back and walks away, with DROCHAN sitting on his forearm.

The battlefield stills. Epona still on the ground.

FADE TO BLACK
AND IN TO THE
ANIMATED
MONTAGE.

ANIMATION SEQUENCE

MESOPOTAMIA

The first great cities.

Kings build walls. People who once shared water and land now fight over ownership.

EPONA walks between two armies preparing for battle.

She hears a horse whinny. Turns. Nothing.

Across a distant hill, OLK watches.

EGYPT

Massive monuments rise.

Thousands labour under the sun.

A nobleman's horses are adorned with gold while workers collapse from exhaustion.

EPONA pauses beside a dying horse. She strokes its neck.

Not CROITHE. She keeps walking.

OLK watches from the shadow of a monument.

ROME

Crowds roar in an arena.

A horse collapses during a chariot race.

The crowd cheers the violence. EPONA kneels beside the animal.

The world celebrates spectacle while she mourns loss.

OLK stands among the crowd. The only person not cheering. Watching her.

WITCH HUNTS

A woman is dragged through a village.

Fear has turned neighbour against neighbour.

The woman catches EPONA'S eye. For a moment, they recognise each other as outsiders.

The woman disappears into smoke and flame. EPONA continues alone.

OCEAN CROSSING

Centuries pass.

EPONA is exhausted.

She boards a crowded ship carrying Chinese migrants seeking opportunity during the Australian gold rush.

Families huddle together. Children sleep against their parents. They still have each other.

EPONA has no one.

As the ship crosses the ocean she stands at the rail each night. Searching the water. Listening for CROITHE.

OLK watches from the darkness of the deck. Never speaking. Never leaving.

ARRIVAL IN AUSTRALIA

The ship enters Sydney Harbour.

The land feels different. Older. Alive.

EPONA pauses. For the first time in centuries she feels something.

A faint pull. A whisper. Not enough to follow. Just enough to notice.

THE CITY

EPONA sits on a sandstone outcrop overlooking a small colonial settlement.

Time begins moving around her.

People arrive. Buildings rise.

Roads form.

Horse carts become motor cars.

Motor cars become streams of traffic.

The city grows. The world speeds up. EPONA barely moves.

Years become decades. Decades become generations. People pass her every day. Nobody notices her.

The city becomes glass and steel. Phones replace conversation.

People walk past each other without looking up.

The world becomes more connected than ever. Yet somehow more alone.

EPONA sits in the same place. Waiting. Watching. Forgotten. Exactly as OLK intended.

THE BREAKING POINT

Rain. Night. Modern city.

EPONA now drinks. Not because she is weak. Because she has finally lost hope.

The search has consumed centuries.

The Cornucopia is cracked. Her hair has dulled. She no longer listens for CROITHE.

For the first time, she gives up. In the distance, OLK watches.

His victory complete.

Or so he believes.

THE CALL

A gust of wind.

A faint whinny.

CROITHE.

The closest it has ever sounded.

EPONA freezes. Tears fill her eyes. She stands. Looks west. Toward the mountains. Toward Country.

FINAL IMAGE

EPONA leaves the city behind.

Glass towers fade into the distance.

The landscape opens.

Rolling hills. Ancient mountains. The wind carries another faint whinny.

And somewhere far away, beneath Country, CROITHE'S spirit begins to stir.

FADE TO BLACK.

END ANIMATED SEQUENCE

24

I/E. THE LOCAL PUB - EVENING

24

It's modern day. A slow bustle hums through a charming country town. Locals stroll the footpaths, chatting in clusters. Utes and cars line both sides of the street, parked outside shops and cafes. The sun glows warmly over well-kept shopfronts and neatly trimmed trees, swaying gently in the breeze.

A classic two-storey pub sits proudly on the corner, its white-fenced veranda overlooking the heartbeat of the town.

On that veranda, EPONA slumps in a faded chair, her head resting on the table in front of her. Her face is weathered with dirt and time. Hair matted. Clothes creased and stained. A few empty glasses are scattered across the table, with one half-empty beside her head.

She watches the street with hollow eyes, not really seeing, more remembering.

A magpie sings somewhere in the distance.

Parents linger nearby, waiting for their kids to get off the school bus. A few of them glance toward EPONA, staring just a moment too long.

Standing on the footpath is WESLEY (late 30s, rugged, handsome, tall athletic build, dark hair, dressed in dirty farm work clothes).

A school bus pulls up in front of him. The doors fold open, and kids spill out, racing toward their parents.

LILLY (9, tiny and petite, soft blonde hair in a school uniform) jumps off the bus and skips over to her dad WESLEY.

LILLY

No more school for three weeks!

WESLEY looks down at her with a grin.

LILLY (CONT'D)
That means I get to come to work
with you!

WESLEY rolls his eyes, already picturing it.

LILLY grabs his hand as they begin walking toward the ute.
She skips, lively and curious.

As they near the pub, LILLY begins to slow, her gaze drawn to
the woman slouched in the chair in old rag cloths.

EPONA turns, meeting her eyes slow, deliberate.

Something flickers between them.

LILLY'S steps falter, causing WESLEY to slow, too.

He notices her staring at the woman on the veranda and gently
tugs her hand, urging her forward.

LILLY (CONT'D)
Who is that?

WESLEY
Nobody. Just someone who got stuck.
Don't you end up like that.

LILLY
Is she stuck there? She's always
there.

They move on.

LILLY glances back. As her eyes meet EPONA'S again, a gust of
wind sweeps through, blowing her hair across her face.

LILLY climbs in to the passenger seat of WESLEY'S ute.

EPONA doesn't move, still watching. Her blue eyes shimmer
with pain and emptiness.

Unreachable.

Unreadable.

25

EXT. COUNTRY ROAD - AFTERNOON

25

A narrow country road winds through hills and valleys,
flanked by golden grass and scattered gum trees.

Fenced paddocks stretch for miles, dotted with cattle and rusted sheds. The late sun casts long shadows, painting the land in warm amber light.

WESLEY'S UTE hums along the bitumen, the engine low and steady. Dust curls up from the roadside as he takes the bend, framed by trees turning gold and red with the season.

Inside, LILLY leans against the window, watching the landscape roll by. WESLEY glances over, says nothing, just drives.

The road continues ahead, endless and familiar.

26

EXT. WESLEY'S HOUSE AND WORKSHOP - EVENING

26

A humble weatherboard home sits nestled in the hills, its corrugated tin roof glowing under the warm haze of the golden hour. TEX, the horse, grazes in a nearby yard. Two dogs chained near the kennel lift their heads as the last light fades.

Out back, a weathered tin shed stands open, the glow of work lights spilling from within.

27

INT. WESLEY'S WORKSHOP - EVENING

27

The inside of the shed is a treasure trove of leathercraft and legacy. Every inch is lived in, tools neatly hung, handmade saddles, strips of tanned leather, and faded photos pinned to the walls. A heavy wooden workbench dominates the centre, worn smooth by time.

On the bench sit two Akubra hats – one dusty and faded with age, with a distinctive hatband with three small guinea fowl feathers; the other, newer, is WESLEY'S, shaped just the same. Both have their sides curled up like a rider's wave.

WESLEY and LILLY sit shoulder to shoulder, carefully polishing an old stock saddle. WESLEY sizes up a leather stirrup strap, cutting a new hole with a leather punch.

WESLEY

Almost fits you. Just needs one more hole.

LILLY beams with excitement.

She looks over at the dusty old hat resting nearby.

LILLY
Why are the sides bent up like
that?

WESLEY sets down his leather punch and picks up the old hat,
brushing the dust off with his sleeve.

WESLEY
Stockmen roll up the sides so the
wind doesn't rip it off when
they're riding fast... The curve
lets the wind pass through. If it's
flat, the wind gets under it -
gone.

LILLY
Whose was it?

WESLEY hesitates, the weight of memory surfacing.

WESLEY
It was given to the people who
raised me. It's the only piece I've
got that connects me to where I
come from. Only clue I've ever had.

He pauses, then gently places it on LILLY's head, adjusting
it with care.

WESLEY (CONT'D)
I reckon you can wear it now.

LILLY beams, her hands flying up, holding it in place with
both hands.

LILLY
Now I've got one just like you.

She looks up at him.

LILLY (CONT'D)
You look sad.

WESLEY hesitates. The weight of memory crosses his face.

He looks at LILLY smiles, snapping the negative thoughts from
his mind.

WESLEY doesn't know how to answer. The silence stretches.

The shed door creaks open.

SAM (First Nations, tall, athletic, dark curly hair, big friendly eyes, in dusty farm gear and a dark brown Akubra) steps inside.

WESLEY looks to SAM

WESLEY

They say never trust a man in a black hat.

SAM

It's not black, it's brown. Just caked beautiful black dirt.

LILLY giggles.

WESLEY

Alright, if you're helping tomorrow, you'd best brush your teeth and get to bed.

LILLY scrunches up her nose as she looks at WESLEY.

WESLEY (CONT'D)

Make sure you brush them.

She hops off the stool and heads for the door still proudly wearing her new hat.

SAM

(Calling after her)

Speaking of teeth, my missus got her new ones this week.

She stops.

SAM (CONT'D)

She looks real flash now, but if you don't brush yours, we'll have to yank 'em all out.

LILLY looks horrified and confused, her eyes wide open as she stares at SAM and shakes her head.

LILLY

I'll brush 'em twice!

She disappears into the night.

SAM

Shit, you should see her. New teeth. Looks hilarious.

SAM laughs. WESLEY grins, shaking his head.

28

EXT. WALCHA TOWNSHIP - NIGHT

28

The wind picks up as EPONA staggers down a quiet country road, leaving the pub's glow behind. Her boots crunch against gravel. Her figure weaves slightly with each step.

She approaches a run-down weatherboard house on the edge of the township, it's paint flaking, porch light flickering. Weeds grow through cracks in the path.

A woman dressed in a cloak waits at her gate, still, composed, almost out of place.

EPONA
(slow and slurred)
I don't want anything from you.

DAICHI
They spoke of you as broken, a soul
adrift in her own undoing.

Epona blinks, unsettled. She knows that voice.

EPONA
Well, if you don't mind, I need to
go inside.

She pushes past her through the gate.

As she walks passed DAICHI gets a smell of her and winces.

DAICHI
I shall return with the dawn. The
message I bear is not light, and it
calls for a mind unclouded.

EPONA looks back to her confused.

EPONA
Piss off, and don't come back in
the morning... you wouldn't know
shit.

She stumbles up the stairs and slams the door.

DAICHI watches her go, shaking her head.

DAICHI
(quietly, to herself)
And I've no wish to know it.

29 EXT. COUNTRY TOWN STREET - MORNING

29

Morning light settles over the small town. Magpies warble from power lines.

An old Holden ute rolls slowly past.

The street is neat, quiet, ordinary.

A modest weatherboard home with green striped awnings and tidy hedges.

SAM'S ute waits in the driveway behind a little sadan car

The house is homely and tidy in comparison to EPONA'S house.

Inside, life is already moving.

30 INT. SAM AND SHANNON'S HOUSE - MORNING

30

Morning light fills the kitchen. SHANNON (30s, First Nations, neat jeans and shirt, hair tied back) stands at the bench making breakfast. She pours milk into a child's bowl of Weet-Bix. JAY (5, First Nations, short dark hair, still in pyjamas) waits eagerly at the bench. SAM enters, already dressed for work. He grabs his travel mug, dumps in an enormous spoonful of instant coffee, adds hot water.

SHANNON

What are you doing today?

SAM

Cattle work.

Jay grins. He can't wait until he's old enough to go with his dad.

JAY

When can I come with you?

SAM

Soon, when you're a-

SHANNON

You won't be goin' near that place.

Sam looks at her.

SAM

Oh darl... you don't believe all that stuff?

SHANNON
It's our people.

And it should be remembered. Sam seals the lid on his coffee.
Grabs his keys. Heads for the door.

SAM
We do remember them.

He walks out. Door closes behind him. Shannon hands Jay his
breakfast. Kisses him on the forehead.

31 **INT. EPONA'S HOUSE, BATHROOM - MORNING** 31

Light slices through broken blinds.

Epونا, pale and hungover, stares at herself in the mirror.

She steps into the shower, steam rising around her. As the
water hits her face.

A screeching whinny rips through her head.

She gasps, slams her hand against the tiled wall, bracing
herself.

The pain isn't physical. It's soul-deep.

32 **INT. EPONA'S HOUSE, LIVING ROOM - MORNING** 32

The living room is a filthy mess of neglect. Years of
isolation, addiction, and detachment are piled into every
corner. Empty wine bottles, takeout containers, crumpled
clothes, and scraps of paper litter the stained carpet. Books
and dusty untouched sitting on shelves. Sunlight struggles
through the grimy windows, casting long, tired shadows.

From deep within the couch, a rat scurries into view – calm,
familiar. He pauses beside an upturned chip packet, nibbling.

Sensing company, his ears twitch and disappears back into the
couch cushions, slipping between crumbs and crumpled receipts
like a ghost in a den.

EPONA, wrapped in a towel, steps into the room. She freezes.

DAICHI sits calmly on her couch, dressed in her cloak, but
with the hood down, turning over her **Cornucopia** in her hands
like a puzzle box.

EPONA
What the hell are you doing here?

DAICHI
As promised, I return. And now,
perhaps, you are sober enough to
hear what must be said.

Epona Snatches the Cornucopia from her hands.

EPONA
Keep your hands off my stuff,
creep. I'm not interested in
anything you... how did you get in
to my house?

DAICHI
The front door was open.

She gestures to the door without looking, then glances around
the filthy room.

DAICHI (CONT'D)
How does EPONA, once revered, once
divine, come to dwell in squalor
such as this?

EPONA is taken a back, as no one knows who she is, she has
not heard her name in centuries.

DAICHI (CONT'D)
Tell me... is that a rat in your
furniture?

EPONA
That's Lenny, he needed a place
to... anyway it's none of your
business.

DAICHI
(Tries to speak)
The message I bring calls for
you...

EPONA abruptly cuts her off.

EPONA
I don't care. You need to get out
of my house.

She stands but doesn't move toward the door.

DAICHI
Before I go, know this. The soul
you seek has been uncovered.

EPONA stills.

DAICHI (CONT'D)
Your journey, the pull towards this
place, this town you felt it.
That screeching in your ears? It is
her, calling to you.

EPONA'S eyes brim with tears. Her voice cracks.

EPONA
Croithe...

DAICHI
Her soul is no longer hidden. The
keepers grow weak, and OLC draws
near. He seeks to wield her
spirit... to awaken his army and
lay waste to all living things.

EPONA lunges forward, grabs DAICHI by the shoulders.

EPONA
Where is she? tell me where she is.

DAICHI pushes EPONA off, she is much stronger than EPONA.

DAICHI
I shall speak the words that will
guide you to her. But be warned,
OLC's shadow listens. You must move
before the wind carries word.

EPONA steps back. She nods.

With calm gravity, DAICHI speaks in Indigenous Australian
Language.

DAICHI (CONT'D)
*(This will be said in indigenous
language and be on the screen in
english subtitles).*
The Star fell blazing, and came to
rest in the land of the **DUNGHUTTI**.
Where wild waters have run since
time before names.

EPONA clutches the Cornucopia tightly to her chest.

She turns slowly toward the open front door.

A sudden gust of wind rushes in, sweeping through the room. Scraps of paper lift into the air, circling her like restless spirits.

Her hair lifts, catching the wind, and for a moment, it glows white, the first flicker of her power returning.

On the wind, a sound, a distant, echoing whinny.

EPONA winces, grabbing at her ear... but then stops. Her eyes widen.

She recognises it.

Then DAICHI is gone.

She stands alone in the mess, in the silence.

33

EXT. OPEN FARMLAND - MIDDAY

33

Rolling hills stretch beneath a pale sun. The earth is gold and green, patchy with old bush, scorched logs, and wild scrub edging the paddocks.

A mob of cattle moves slowly across the land, urged forward by WESLEY on horseback, riding RUSTY, his strong bay gelding, SAM driving a side-by-side MULE.

Next to him looking on is LILLY as she rides her horse TEX. She is wearing her new hat proudly.

Suddenly, a gust of wind whips through the grass, spooking the cattle.

They bolt, turning sharply, heading straight toward the bush.

WESLEY

We can't let them in there, it will take a day to get 'em out.

SAM is stuck on the wrong side of the mob, unable to circle around without splitting the mob of cattle.

LILLY looks on not knowing what she should do.

WESLEY spurs RUSTY forward, slipping through the gate.

He sends his dogs ahead and gallops fast, cutting the mob off, turning the lead cattle back toward the fence line.

The mob of cattle slows, then settles, walking back along the fence.

SAM drives over in the MULE, pulling up beside WESLEY at the edge of the bush.

LILLY trots up beside him.

SAM
Where did that wind come from?
Lucky they didn't break through
there. Would've be a nightmare.

LILLY
Lucky RUSTY is fast.

WESLEY
(grinning at her)
Lucky his jockey is a gun ridder...

He clicks RUSTY on and trots ahead.

LILLY follows.

SAM watches them go, but his eyes are pulled to the bush.

In the shadows of the trees, he sees a First Nations man, WALUMARRA (an older First Nations man, with a commanding presence, deep-set eyes, strong features, and a wild, full white beard that speaks of both wisdom and weather), standing still, watching.

Beside him, perched quietly on a gnarled branch, is a large eagle, its feathers streaked with age. One eye glints blue, the other brown.

He looks to a group of currawongs sitting a branch watching.

SAM follows his gaze seeing the currawongs. He blinks, unsettled. He shakes his head, rubs his eyes.

He looks back to the indigenous man again.

He is gone.

SAM exhales slowly, then drives on, following behind WESLEY, LILLY and his dogs.

OLK moves through the trees, slow and deliberate. His cloak brushes the ground.

Birds begin to appear.

First a CURRAWONG.

Then another.

Magpies take flight from branches and fence posts.

They gather behind him, following his path.

DROCHAN swoops down and lands on OLK'S shoulder. His claws dig into the fabric of his coat.

OLK doesn't react.

The flock grows.

Dozens.

Then hundreds.

OLK stops.

The bush falls silent.

A shaft of sunlight breaks through the trees and lands across his face.

He closes his eyes.

Listening.

The faint sound of a HORSE'S WHINNY drifts on the wind.

Barely there.

OLK freezes.

His eyes snap open.

For the first time, his expression softens.

The sound disappears.

The softness vanishes with it.

He listens.

Waiting.

Nothing.

DROCHAN lets out a low cry.

OLK reaches up and gently strokes the bird's feathers.

His gaze drifts toward the distant mountains.

Fixed.

Certain.

OLK
(whispers)
You're here.

He lowers his hand.

The birds lift together into the sky.

A black swarm spirals above the treetops.

OLK continues walking.

The flock follows.

35

EXT. CATTLE YARDS - DAY

35

Dust swirls in the sun as the mob of cattle push into the steel yards. Gates clang. Dogs bark. The air is thick with noise and tension.

WESLEY rides alongside the mob on TEX, whistling to keep them moving. SAM leans against a gate, LILLY stands beside him..

The cattle are restless, stamping, shoving, eyes wide.

SAM
They're bloody stirred up today.

WESLEY
Shouldn't be. They just walked ten
K.

JOHN (60s, rugged, weathered, a man who looks like he was born in a saddle) swings a gate closed and clips it with a seasoned flick. His dusty Akubra is low over his brow, and he grins.

WESLEY (CONT'D)
You've got perfect timing John,
right after all the hard work.

JOHN
I wasn't born last week.

They all laugh, the easy rhythm of people who've worked together for years.

JOHN notices LILLY's hat. A fond smile creeps in across his face.

Then the mood shifts.

LILLY
(pointing)
Look.

They turn.

Above the tree line, a dark swarm of birds spirals high into the sky. A massive flock of currawongs, twisting like smoke.

WESLEY
What the hell is going on there?

SAM
Don't know... but there's been some
strange shit today.

They all watch in silence.

JOHN
That's out past the ridge... near
Gins Leap.

Everyone turns to JOHN.

LILLY
What's Gins Leap?

No one answers.

He glances at SAM.

SAM
Don't look at me. I'm not in to
that spiritual crap.

JOHN looks back to LILLY.

JOHN
Nothing.

SAM shrugs uncomfortable.

JOHN saying nothing, but his expression says plenty.

A GATE SLAMS shut behind them, snapping them out of the moment.

JOHN (CONT'D)
Anyway, pub tonight. My shout.

WESLEY
(grinning)
What's the occasion?

JOHN
Just reckon it's time for a feed
and a beer with the crew. You in?

SAM
Always.

LILLY
Can I come?

JOHN
Wouldn't be a party without ya,
Lil.

JOHN (CONT'D)
Bring the family Sam.

They start heading back toward the yards, the birds in the distance still circling as shadows grow long behind them.

They return to the work, but the birds are still circling.

36

EXT. GORGE EDGE - LATE AFTERNOON

36

The sky burns gold behind him.

OLK stands motionless at the cliff's edge. His black cloak brushes the dirt.

Below, the gorge stretches into the distance.

Ancient.

Untouched.

The river winds through the valley floor, weaving between towering cliffs and old river gums.

On his arm, DROCHAN perches silently.

Watching.

Listening.

A shadow passes overhead.

OLK looks up.

CATHAN, a WEDGE TAILED EAGLE circles above the gorge.

One eye missing, a whole where its eye once was.

The other fixed on him.

The eagle lets out a sharp cry.

OLK follows its path.

Across the gorge.

High on the opposite ridge.

WALUMARRA stands motionless.

Watching.

The eagle glides down and lands on a dead branch above him.

Neither moves.

The wind rises between them.

DROCHAN shifts uneasily.

OLK'S gaze drifts from WALUMARRA to the valley below.

Slowly, he kneels.

Places his hand against the earth.

Silence.

Then—

A faint vibration travels through the ground.

Barely noticeable.

OLK freezes.

The corner of his mouth lifts.

A rare smile.

Gone almost instantly.

DROCHAN lets out a low warning cry.

OLK'S eyes return to WALUMARRA.

The smile disappears.

The eagle spreads its wings.

Watching.

Guarding.

The wind tears through the gorge.

Dust swirls around OLK'S boots.

Neither man breaks eye contact.

OLK slowly rises.

OLK
(quietly)
Leave.

WALUMARRA remains still.

The eagle screeches.

DROCHAN answers.

The sounds echo through the gorge.

A challenge.

A warning.

OLK studies them both for a long moment.

Then turns.

Begins descending into the valley below.

DROCHAN launches into the air.

The currawong circles above him.

The eagle remains with WALUMARRA.

Watching as OLK disappears into the bush.

The battle for the gorge has begun.

37

INT. LOCAL PUB - NIGHT

37

Laughter, clinking glasses, and music spill out into the night air.

The pub is alive, packed with locals, farmers fresh from the paddocks, young families, and old timers sharing stories over pots of beer. A footy game hums quietly on a TV in the corner. Posters of upcoming markets and rodeos clutter the walls.

The NEPALESE OWNERS move quickly, smiling and serving – part of the heartbeat of the town.

At the bar, EPONA leans on one elbow. She watches the room, present but on edge, like a wild animal trying to act tame. Her hair's cleaner, tied back, but her clothes still bear the scruff of someone who doesn't expect to be noticed.

The pub door swings open. WESLEY, SAM, JOHN, and LILLY step inside.

Across the room, SHANNON waves them over to a table she's saved. Beside her is JAY he is playing with some colouring in pencils and drawing.

They make their way over. As they reach the table, each man removes his hat before sitting. WESLEY rests his neatly beside his chair. LILLY, watching, mimics the gesture, removing her Akubra with care and pride.

JOHN places his hat on the back of his chair, revealing a hatband with the same arrangement of guinea fowl feathers as LILLY's hat.

At the bar, EPONA watches them. A flicker of longing, or memory.

Then, a sharp jolt of pain.

She winces. Shifts her weight to stay upright. Her hand presses to the side of her head. A shrill whinny rings in her ears, loud, cutting, unmistakable.

She gasps – body jolting, and stumbles sideways.

Her stool Crashes to the floor. She follows, hitting hard.

A hush falls over the pub.

SHANNON stands immediately, rushing over. She helps EPONA sit back on the stool, gently steadying her.

Eyes turn. Whispers rise. No one speaks directly, but everyone watches.

SHANNON returns to the table and sits. An awkward silence settles.

SAM
(to break it)
Show Lilly your new teeth.

SHANNON
Piss off.

SAM
Are ya wearing 'em?

SHANNON
Yes I am.

SHANNON flashes a big Smile.

SAM grins, cheeky.

SHANNON glares.

SHANNON (CONT'D)
Don't make me slap that smirk off
your face.

He straightens, smile gone.

Two figures approach.

ROBBO (28, tall, slim build, black cowboy hat, blue jeans, boots, button-up shirt) and KAT (26, short, stocky, with a cowboy hat, jeans, sequined belt, boots, and a pressed shirt).

JOHN stands to greet them, offering a firm handshake, then turns back to the table.

JOHN
Right, before we order dinner, I
want to introduce Robbo and Kat.
They'll be starting work with us
tomorrow, breaking in the
yearlings.

WESLEY looks up, caught off guard. LILLY freezes mid-sip of her lemonade.

LILLY
That's Dad's job.

JOHN
We've got a heavy run of sheep work
ahead. Too much to juggle. This is
just to help.

EPONA is listening in the background.

SAM shifts in his seat.

WESLEY glares at JOHN... silence.

JOHN (CONT'D)
I need you and Sam full-time on the
sheep. Timing's tight this year.

WESLEY nods slowly, jaw tight. Under the table, his hand
flexes.

ROBBO
We'll have 'em broke in no time.

WESLEY'S stare hardens, cold and steady as he looks at ROBBO.

LILLY
(mutters to Wesley)
This isn't fair. I wanted to help.

WESLEY puts a hand on LILLY'S knee, grounding her.

WESLEY
(softly)
Life isn't fair, Lil.

ROBBO
Right, we will leave you all to it.

ROBBO throws a wink to KAT and they turn and walk back to the
bar.

JOHN sits back in his chair.

WESLEY
Shouting us dinner makes sense now.

JOHN ignores WESLEY.

JOHN
How strange were those birds
circling above Gins Leap today.

SHANNON
Gins Leap?

You better not have Lil anywhere near that place.

SAM
It's just the back ridge. Why?

SHANNON
That's not just country, that place
holds pain.
(MORE)

SHANNON (CONT'D)

Spirits still walk out there. You know what happen' there. White settlers rounded up our people, women and children and forced them to jump off the cliff.

The table quiets.

SHANNON (CONT'D)

When spirits ain't laid to rest proper, they stay restless. And the ones at Gins Leap... they're loud.

LILLY glances at WESLEY, unnerved.

SAM

(low)

I saw a man out there today. Old fella. Just standing in the trees. Then... gone.

WESLEY

I thought you didn't believe in all that stuff?

SAM

I don't.

(beat)

But I saw him.

SHANNON

That'd be WALUMARRA. He's a spirit too, but he's not like the others. He's a guardian. Protector of the spirits out there.

Everyone listens.

SHANNON (CONT'D)

They say a star fell long ago, a soul trapped inside. WALUMARRA's been watching over it ever since. Keeping the dark away.

A sudden gust whistles under the door. LILLY pulls her jacket closer.

From the edge of the room, EPONA stands. She is still, watching.

SAM looks over to EPONA, he can see that she is staring at them.

Their meals come and they eat their dinner.

The bar buzzes around them as people chat, eat and drink.

Kids run through the bar playing.

38

EXT. OUT SIDE THE LOCAL PUB - NIGHT

38

The pub spills warm light onto the street as the front doors swing open.

Laughter and music drift out.

WESLEY, LILLY, SAM, SHANNON and JAY step outside, followed by JOHN, still calling farewells back inside.

JOHN

Righto! Don't let anyone steal my stool.

The doors shut behind them.

WESLEY and LILLY turn left toward WESLEY'S ute.

Lilly races ahead and climbs in.

SAM, SHANNON, JAY and JOHN head the other direction toward their cars.

JOHN (CONT'D)

See ya in the mornin'. That Robbo bloke is startin' tomorrow. We'll see how they go hay.

They near JOHN'S ute.

Everyone stops.

The passenger side window of JOHN'S ute is smashed in and sprayed across the side in thick black paint.

SHANNON frowns.

SAM

What's all that about?

JOHN barely blinks.

JOHN

Jees... it will be a breezy drive home

SAM snorts.

SHANNON still studies the paint.

SHANNON
They get the wrong car?

JOHN
Nah.
All good. Harmless.

SHANNON
Harmless?

He climbs into the ute.

The old engine coughs, rattles, then starts.

SAM watches him go.

SHANNON takes JAY'S hand.

They walk to their car beneath the streetlights.

The buzz of the pub behind them.

The silence of the town ahead.

39

INT. SAM AND SHANNON'S HOME - NIGHT

39

SHANNON sits in the lounge room, sipping tea, staring ahead.
The house is warm and lived in. Kids toys scattered nearby.
SAM walks out in his pyjamas, rubbing his eyes. SHANNON turns to him.

SHANNON
What was with John's ute tonight?

SAM
Dunno

Shannon is in disbelief.

SHANNON
I know I wouldn't be happy if it
was my car.

SAM
No one would be game enough to do
that to you hun...

SAM walks to the fridge, grabs a drink.

SAM (CONT'D)

White fellas, they do strange shit.

SHANNON watches him.

SHANNON

I honestly don't know what is going on in the world. People have gone mad, turning on each other at every turn. So much senseless hatred towards each other. What can we do?

SAM shrugs.

SAM

All I know is that I have a big day tomorrow, I'm off to bed.

He walks out.

SHANNON sips her tea, thinking.

Outside, a CURRAWONG calls in the dark.

40

EXT. SHEARING SHED & YARDS - MORNING

40

Morning sun spills across the rolling paddocks. A mob of sheep flows in to the sheep yards, dust hanging in the air behind them.

WESLEY rides through the gate on his horse, calm and steady. Beside him, LILLY follows on TEX, wearing her helmet.

SAM pulls up nearby on his motorbike. The work is done. The sheep settle in the yards bleating calmly.

WESLEY swings down from his horse and loosens the girth on his stock saddle. LILLY dismounts dropping to the ground with a thud and it is a long drop down for her, and removes her helmet and puts her hat on her well-worn felt hat, decorated with guinea fowl feathers tucked into the hatband. WESLEY smiles.

WESLEY

Now that's more like it.

LILLY grins. SAM hops off the motorbike and walks over. The two horses stand quietly tied to the rail, WESLEY takes the saddles off the horses and sits them on the fence rail.

The morning is peaceful.

WESLEY (CONT'D)

Run and get a bucket of water for them Lil.

LILLY'S attention drifts. Beneath a nearby gum tree sits a small KANGAROO. It scratches at its ear and watches them. LILLY points.

LILLY

Look.

SAM follows her gaze and smiles.

SAM

You know how the kangaroo got its tail?

LILLY shakes her head.

LILLY

No.

SAM leans against the rail. WESLEY keeps unsaddling his horse, half listening.

SAM

Long time ago, kangaroo didn't have a tail at all...

LILLY'S eyes grow wide.

SAM (CONT'D)

There two kangaroos, a large brown plains kangaroo with long limbs, and a small grey hill kangaroo with shorter arms. Thats what he is, see he is grey with short arms. The small kangaroo found some sugarbag in a rock hole and ate it. When the big kangaroo came along asking for some, the small kangaroo tricked him by telling him to reach down into the hole, where he only found spiders.

CLANG!

A loud metallic bang echoes from the sheep yards. Everyone freezes. Another CLUNK. Metal striking metal.

WESLEY freezes. Eyes narrow. He knows that sound.

Another loud clang. A yell.

He drops the draft gate and starts striding toward the cattle yards.

SAM notices, watching him stalk off with purpose.

SAM (CONT'D)
(mutters)
Shit.

He hurries after him.

42

EXT. CATTLE YARDS - MORNING (CONTINUOUS)

42

ROBBO and KAT are working a yearling, if "working" is the word.

ROBBO yanks hard on a rope looped around the horse's neck, forcing it sideways. The young horse panics, crashing into the rails.

It scrambles, rears, throws itself against the fence again.

KAT waves a plastic bag, yelling. Dust flies.

EPONA moves across the yard from the parked ute, carrying a gear bag toward the yards.

She sees WESLEY charging in. Sees the chaos.

Their eyes meet, WESLEY looks at her, shocked. (What the hell is she doing here?)

But he says nothing. His rage is laser-focused.

EPONA drops the bag without hesitation.

She breaks into a run behind him, heading straight for the yards.

At the rails, WESLEY climbs the fence and strides straight up to ROBBO - and punches him in the face.

ROBBO drops to the ground, grabbing his face.

ROBBO
What was that for?

WESLEY picks up the rope off the ground and starts to calm the horse. It's uneasy, trembling, not ready to trust.

WESLEY
You'll damage the horse for life,
they don't forget.

EPONA stands at the fence, watching. Her eyes soften.

A currawong lands silently on the railing beside the gate. It watches.

SAM and JOHN arrive, standing on the opposite side of the yards.

KAT is frozen, stunned, just staring at ROBBO on the ground.

ROBBO gets up, ready for a fight.

JOHN
What's goin' on here?

ROBBO
This idiot came outta nowhere and
punched me!

WESLEY
You're no horseman.

ROBBO
What would you know?

WESLEY snaps his gaze to EPONA.

WESLEY
What are you doing here?

EPONA doesn't answer.

WESLEY (CONT'D)
(low, direct)
Are you with them?

EPONA
Yes, no, I'm... I'm here to help
with the horses.

Behind them, the horses stir in their yard, restless.

The currawong still watches from the railing.

JOHN looks to ROBBO.

JOHN
I don't think this was a good idea.
Pack up your gear and head off.

ROBBO fumes. KAT walks out in a huff.

ROBBO
Fine... You lot betta watch
yourselves.

He storms off.

He spots SAM and gives him a dirty look.

ROBBO (CONT'D)
It's a wonder this bloke didn't do
a welcome to country.

SAM is puzzled by the random outburst directed at him.

WESLEY quietly works with the yearling, loosening the rope from its neck.

The currawong shifts to the rail beside the adjacent yard, where ten young yearlings are penned.

As ROBBO passes through the gate, he latches it behind him, but on his way to the ute, he casually unlatches the gate to the yearling yard.

The currawong takes flight, wings flapping, spooking the horses.

EPONA sees the bird. Sees the gate swinging open.

The horses stir, restless. One slams into the gate, it bursts wide open.

The mob bolts, galloping down the hill.

EPONA looks up, and sees LILLY strolling along the track, eyes cast down beneath her big hat.

EPONA runs.

Everyone looks, then sees what she's running toward.

The horses thunder downhill, heading straight for LILLY.

EPONA sprints, cutting across the paddock, and places herself between the mob of Yellings and LILLY. She stands tall, holding the Cornucopia in her hand.

SAM and WESLEY run after her.

The horses are within five meters, then EPONA vanishes behind a rising cloud of dust.

From SAM and WESLEY'S view, it looks like she's been trampled.

Then, the dust begins to clear.

The horses are circling. Slowing. They stop.

EPONA stands in the centre of the circle.

One horse steps forward, CATHAN, a bay gelding.

He lowers his head, revealing he is missing an eye, Epona reaches out and touches his nose.

EPONA climbs onto his back.

A shimmer of gold passes through her skin.

She clicks him into a calm walk.

The rest of the horses follow, steady, quiet, all the way back to the yards.

LILLY watches, completely in awe.

She walks slowly past SAM and WESLEY.

They say nothing.

They can't believe what they just saw.

The horses trail along behind as EPONA and CATHAN lead them back in to the yards.

A currawong is still sitting in the nearby tree watching, its beady eyes blinking, everything it see's OLK can see.

43

EXT. GORGE COUNTRY - DAY

43

EXT. GORGE COUNTRY - DAY

Through the eyes of DROCHAN we soar above the gorge.

Ancient cliffs.

Twisted river gums.

The winding river below.

OLK descends through the bush. His long cloak drags across stone, dirt and fallen branches. Purposeful. Certain.

Above him, on the distant ridge,

WALUMARRA watches.

CATHAN the one eyed eagle perched nearby. Guarding. Waiting.

OLK stops.

The bush falls silent.

He lifts his face toward the sky.

The wind stirs around him.

DROCHAN lands on a branch above. Watching.

OLK
(quietly)
Spirits of the forgotten... Rise.

Silence. OLK steps forward.

OLK (CONT'D)
You who were abandoned.
You who were driven from your land.
You who were left behind. You who
were buried and never mourned.

The wind begins to swirl. Leaves dance across the ground.

OLK (CONT'D)
I know what it is to stand outside
the light. To watch others be
chosen. To be forgotten.

Dust lifts from the earth.

The trees begin to tremble.

The temperature drops.

OLK (CONT'D)
They built their stories upon your
silence. They buried your grief
beneath the soil. They told the
world to forget. I will not.

DROCHAN lets out a piercing cry.

DROCHAN
WHEE-LOOO.

The sound echoes through the gorge.

OLK
 Walk with me.
 Take back what was stolen. The sun.
 The star. The light. Burn it down.

The wind erupts.

Dust spirals through the trees.

Branches groan.

Shadows move between the trunks. Watching. Listening.
 Answering.

DROCHAN cries again.

DROCHAN
 WHEE-LOOO.

Currawongs begin landing in the tree around him. One. Then
 ten. Then dozens. Then hundreds.

Their cries fill the gorge.

WHEE-LOOO.

WHEE-LOOO.

WHEE-LOOO.

OLK stands unmoving beneath them.

The forgotten have heard his call.

44

EXT. GORGE COUNTRY - DAY (CONTINUED)

44

ABOVE —
 WALUMARRA steps forward to the
 cliff edge.

Below, dust swirls through the gorge.

The cries of hundreds of currawongs echo from the valley.

The ONE EYED EAGLE watches. Silent.

A sudden gust sweeps through the gorge.

WALUMARRA lifts his face toward the sun.

WALUMARRA
(First Nations Language)
No.
You do not belong to the dark. That
is not our way.

The wind carries his voice across the valley. The trees begin to still.

WALUMARRA (CONT'D)
(First Nations Language)
We are sun people. Born of this
land. Not against it.

The sunlight breaks through the clouds. G
old spills across the gorge below.

WALUMARRA (CONT'D)
(First Nations Language)
This land needs protectors. Not
vengeance. Not shadows. Think of
those who come after. Do not trade
your sorrow for poison.

The eagle spreads its wings. The wind changes.

WALUMARRA (CONT'D)
(First Nations Language)
You are not forgotten.
You are not his.

His voice echoes through the gorge. Below, the swirling dust falters.

The cries of the currawongs soften.

The battle for the spirits has begun.

45

EXT. UNDER THE OLD GUM TREE - MIDDAY

45

The wide trunk of a towering gum tree rises like a monument. Its bark is weathered and scarred, limbs reaching high and far, casting a broad patch of shade across the sun-baked paddock.

WESLEY, SAM, LILLY, JOHN, and EPONA sit in a loose circle beneath the tree, on old upturned buckets, cut logs, and a faded esky. A thermos of tea sits among them, lid off, mugs half-full.

LILLY sits beside EPONA.

A magpie sings from a high branch. Somewhere close by, a kookaburra laughs.

WESLEY hands LILLY her lunch box. She opens it and finds a sandwich. Her face drops in disappointment.

SAM sees the look on her face.

He pulls out a brown paper bag and tosses it to her.

WESLEY chews through a homemade sandwich, thick and messy with beetroot and cold lamb.

LILLY opens the bag and and pulls out two party pies. Her face beams.

WESLEY roles his eyes.

WESLEY
The ol' mystery bag, hey.

SAM
They're delicious.

LILLY
Do you have tomato sauce?

SAM
You bet.

He throws her a bottle of sauce. She smothers her pies with it.

EPONA sips tea silently from her mug.

JOHN, seated on a log, does the same.

LILLY notices EPONA doesn't have any food. She quietly passes her lunch box to her.

LILLY
You can have my sandwich.

EPONA shakes her head.

EPONA
No, I'm okey. Thanks.

SAM
(To Epona)
So, where did you learn to talk to horses.

EPONA sits up straight.

WESLEY
She isn't talking to horses, thats
trick training.

EPONA is a little confused by what WESLEY has said.

SAM
Didn't look like a trick to me.

LILLY
It's magic.

WESLEY
There is no such thing as magic
Lil.

JOHN looks at WESLEY for a moment.

JOHN
I don't know what to call it, but
there is something happening here.
And it's real.

LILLY smiles.

WESLEY is not happy with the conversation.

WESLEY
(To Epona)
Why are you here?

EPONA
I'm looking for something.
A spirit. A horse. Her soul...

WESLEY
You serious?

EPONA
Yes, Croithe, she was taken from me
centuries ago.

WESLEY frowns dismissivly.

LILLY
Is she like... a ghost horse?

EPONA
Not a ghost. She's real. Just...
not whole yet.

SAM's eyes widen.

WESLEY
(muttering)
Bloody hell.

SAM
That's what Shannon was telling us
about last night.

WESLEY looks at SAM with disbelief.

JOHN
I heard stories when I was a boy.
About a protector spirit in the
gorge.

WESLEY
(looking at John)
Oh christ, not you to?

LILLY
Maybe your horse is the star.

EPONA looks at her, surprised.

EPONA
I think she is.

WESLEY
(gruff)
We've got enough real problems
without chasing fairytales.

SAM
(quietly)
Just because it's old doesn't make
it a fairytale.

LILLY gazes up into the branches, hopeful.

Everyone falls quiet. The breeze moves gently through the
circle.

EPONA lowers her cup.

EPONA
I need to go down into the gorge.

WESLEY sighs, already tired of this.

EPONA (CONT'D)
That's where Croithe is. Her soul.
And OLK... he's there.

SAM looks up. JOHN listens, calm.

EPONA (CONT'D)

He's gathering spirits, broken ones. Angry ones. Trying to twist them. He wants Croithe's soul to continue this divide. If he succeeds, he'll cast darkness across the land.

JOHN

(chuckles dryly)

Shit. We don't need help with that, people are doing a good enough job with out help.

EPONA

He feeds on that.
Hopelessness. Hate.

She looks to LILLY.

EPONA (CONT'D)

That currawong on the fence, this morning, that was Drochan. OLK's faithful, he was watching and Stirring the horses.

WESLEY's jaw tightens. He stands and paces.

WESLEY

This is ridiculous.
You're filling her head with fairytales and doom.

LILLY

But it's not a fairytale, Dad.

WESLEY

(snaps)

I saw a horse spook. I saw dust.
And now you're saying a bird's possessed by some evil spirit?

SAM

(quietly)

She's right.
There's power out there, and old wounds. I remember stories my Pop told me, about WALUMARRA. He guarded something sacred. He said if darkness ever came back... we'd...

WESLEY throws up his hands cutting SAM off.

WESLEY

No. I'm not doing this. We've got sheep work to get done... You can go on your little adventure. That horse you supposedly talk to, take it, it's useless anyway. There's tack in the shed. Use a stock saddle. But don't expect us to come save you when you get lost down there.... Come on, you lot. Let's go.

WESLEY walks off toward the sheep yards. SAM and LILLY follow him.

JOHN gets to his feet, turns toward the house, then looks back.

JOHN

Look, if you can get some of those horses handled this afternoon and have them tying up. You can have that one with a missing eye to take down the gorge tomorrow.

EPONA gives him a grateful smile. She stands and makes her way to the yards where the horses are.

LILLY glances back to see EPONA walking to the yards.

LILLY

I'm going to watch.

LILLY darts off After EPONA.

WESLEY

No you're.....

WESLEY signs and watches LILLY as she runs after EPONA with Joy.

46

EXT. HORSE YARDS - DAY (NEW)

46

LILLY sits at the base of the horse yards, peering through the bottom rail with pure wonder.

A horse moves past her.

In the centre of the yards stands EPONA.

The horse turns toward her and slowly walks over. EPONA places her hand on its forehead.

Both remain perfectly calm.

Off to one side, three horses stand tied up peacefully.

In the neighbouring yard, four young horses move nervously, still unsettled.

EPONA slips a halter onto the horse and quietly leads it over to the others. She ties it beside them.

The horse stands calmly.

EPONA turns her attention to the anxious horses.

LILLY climbs up onto the fence for a better view.

As EPONA opens the gate, the horses rush away from her.

She walks into the middle of the yard and kneels.

The horses stop.

Watching.

Studying her.

Silence.

Then CATHAN, the horse with one missing eye, steps forward.

He gently nudges her shoulder.

EPONA smiles softly.

She rises to her feet and walks from the yard.

CATHAN follows.

LILLY watches in awe.

Outside the yard, EPONA stops.

CATHAN stands beside her.

EPONA raises a hand.

CATHAN begins to circle around her.

Slowly.

Calmly.

Connected.

LILLY carefully climbs back down from the fence, never taking her eyes off them.

She stands quietly, gripping the rail.

Watching every movement.

47

EXT. MACHINERY SHED - AFTERNOON (NEW)

47

WESLEY carries the sheep drench and drench pack back to the shed. SAM pushes the motorbike beside him. LILLY carries the esky, the dogs trailing happily behind her. A car drives up and stops outside the shed. SHANNON hops out and stands in the open doorway, one arm resting on the roof.

SHANNON

You ready?

SAM

Yep, just a sec.

LILLY runs over and pokes her head through the back door to say hello to JAY. WESLEY gives SHANNON a wave.

SAM (CONT'D)

I'll see ya in the morning.

WESLEY

Yep.

SAM walks over and climbs into the car. SHANNON turns to LILLY.

SHANNON

See ya, Lil.

As she does, she notices a small kangaroo standing just beyond LILLY. For a moment, she's distracted by it. The kangaroo watches them quietly. SHANNON smiles to herself, then climbs back into the car.

LILLY closes the door and waves as they drive down the driveway.

The kangaroo remains standing in the afternoon sun, watching them leave.

48

INT. SAM AND SHANNON'S HOME - NIGHT (NEW)

48

Look. Listen to me. SAM finally turns around.

SHANNON

She said the fracture we see
everywhere...

In people. In the land. In this community. It comes from
pain. Old pain. SAM doesn't know what to say. JAY keeps
playing.

SHANNON (CONT'D)

She said if we don't understand
what happened, we can't understand
what's happening now.

SAM

That's a bit grim.

SHANNON gives him a look.

SHANNON

Did you see that little kangaroo
watching Lil today?

SAM shrugs.

SAM

Yeah.

SHANNON

Sue reckons sometimes things watch
before they act.

SAM laughs.

SAM

And that's why I stick to cattle.

JAY suddenly points excitedly at the television.

JAY

Dad! Dad! Look! I found it!

SAM immediately turns back to the game.

SAM

Good stuff.

SHANNON watches them.

A mixture of amusement and concern.

Outside, a CURRAWONG calls somewhere in the dark.

SHANNON looks toward the window.

Thinking.

49

EXT. TACK SHED - NIGHT (NEW)

49

JOHN walks into the tack room. In the corner sits LILLY'S little stock saddle.

He stops. Smiles.

Unlike the other saddles and tack hanging throughout the shed, hers is spotless.

Most of the others are covered in dust and draped with spider webs.

He walks over and picks up LILLY'S saddle. Carefully. He places it on the saddle rack and hangs the matching bridle and saddle cloth beside it.

A small smile lingers on his face. Then—

SCREECHING BRAKES.

SMASHING GLASS.

Yelling voices.

JOHN freezes.

A bottle shatters outside.

Then another.

The roar of an engine.

A car tears away into the night.

JOHN bolts from the shed.

50

EXT. JOHN'S HOUSE - CONTINUOUS (NEW)

50

Flames crawl across the veranda. Growing. Spreading.

JOHN races through the front gate.

He turns on the tap and yanks the hose free.

His hands shake. The hose sputters.

Then water bursts through.

JOHN frantically sprays the flames as they spread across the timber boards.

Panic in his eyes.

The fire hisses and spits against the water.

51

EXT. WESLEY'S COTTAGE - MORNING (NEW)

51

Nestled amongst the vast farmland sits a small cottage beneath a bright morning sky.

The front of the house is simple. A pile of boots sits beside the door – large men's work boots and a much smaller pair belonging to a little girl.

The front door flings open.

LILLY rushes outside, pulling on her jacket as she runs.

WESLEY stands waiting near the gate.

LILLY runs over and grabs his hand.

Together, they walk towards JOHN'S homestead.

LILLY
Dad? Who taught you to train horses?

WESLEY
I learnt from lots of people. No one person knows everything.

LILLY
Who did Epona learn from?

WESLEY
Don't know.

LILLY
She talks to them.

WESLEY
No, hun. She just knows how to read them.

WESLEY isn't entirely happy to be having this conversation, but he doesn't want to ruin his daughter's excitement.

LILLY
I want to help her today.

WESLEY
How about you help me and Sam get the sheep done, and I'll help you with Tex this afternoon?

LILLY'S smile fades.

Disappointed.

They continue walking towards the homestead as the morning sun rises over the paddocks.

52

EXT. JOHNS HOUSE - MORNING (NEW)

52

The morning sun shines across the property.

The veranda is blackened and scorched.

Broken glass litters the ground.

SAM carries two burnt chairs towards a rubbish pile.

SHANNON sweeps ash from the veranda.

EPONA helps JOHN drag a burnt table across the yard.

WESLEY and LILLY approach. They stop. Taking in the damage.

WESLEY
Bloody hell...

JOHN
Morning.

LILLY walks towards the burnt railing.

LILLY
What happened?

SAM
Someone had a crack at the house.

LILLY studies the burnt timber.

LILLY
Why?

JOHN shrugs.

JOHN
Some people don't like a decision I
made.

LILLY looks at John with a blank face.

JOHN says nothing, because there isn't anything he can say.

WESLEY
People forget what being a good
person is.

EPONA runs her fingers over the charred timber. Quietly.

EPONA
He's close.

WESLEY rolls his eyes.

WESLEY
Who's close?

EPONA
OLK. The community turns on itself.
People stop listening. Start
blaming. That's how he feeds.

SAM looks at the damage.

For the first time, he doesn't dismiss it completely.

A CURRAWONG calls somewhere in the distance. EPONA lifts her
head. Listening.

EPONA (CONT'D)
He's getting stronger.

Silence. JOHN picks up another burnt board.

JOHN
Righto, We've still got sheep to
do. The moment breaks.

Everyone returns to work.

LILLY continues watching EPONA.

53

EXT. SHEEP YARDS - AFTERNOON

53

SAM, WESLEY, and LILLY are working the last of the mob. The sun hangs lower now, the shadows stretching longer across the dusty yards.

The sheep softly bleat as they stand and move through the yards lifting dust.

The sound of horse hooves gets their attention and they look up.

EPONA rides past on CATHAN, bareback, no bridle. Her posture is relaxed, flowing with the horse's movement. She gives a small wave as she passes.

LILLY waves back, beaming.

On a nearby fence post, DROCHAN, the black currawong, watches. He lets out a sharp, echoing cry:

DROCHAN
WHEE-LOOO.

WESLEY watches grimly.

WESLEY
She really is gonna die out there.
No bloody clue what she's doing.

SAM
(shouting after her)
Good luck! I hope WALUMARRA
protects you, and helps you find
your spirit!

EPONA doesn't turn back. She and CATHAN disappear into the bush.

They get back to work.

LILLY brushes dust from her jeans and sighs.

LILLY
I'm bored. I'm gonna go clean my
saddle.

WESLEY
Do your boots while you're at it.

She nods and climbs the fence, heading for the tack shed.

SAM and WESLEY continue pushing sheep through the yards.

EXT. BUSH LAND - AFTERNOON.

The bush is still.

A light breeze moves through the grass.

OLK walks alone.

DROCHAN circles overhead.

Something catches OLK'S eye.

A single GUINEA FOWL FEATHER. Caught amongst the dry grass.

He stops. Bends. Picks it up.

The feather turns slowly between his fingers.

Soft. Delicate.

A stark contrast to the dirt and blood beneath his nails.

He studies it.

For a long moment. The wind stirs.

The feather brushes against his hand.

OLK'S grip tightens.

The feather crumples.

Bent.

Broken.

He stares at it.

Then slowly opens his hand.

The damaged feather drifts to the ground.

The breeze catches it.

Carrying it away through the grass.

OLK watches it disappear.

DROCHAN lands nearby. Waiting.

OLK turns and continues walking.

The currawong follows.

54

EXT. SHEEP YARDS - AFTERNOON.

54

Sheep run through the race as WESLEY is drafting them.

SAM is pushing sheep up in the back pens.

The dogs are barking and running up and down the race.

WESLEY pauses. Looks up.

WESLEY

You seen or heard Lil in the last
bit?

SAM

(frowning)

Nah. Think she's was still in the
shed.

WESLEY drops his gate, jumps the fence and bolts toward the
tack shed.

55

EXT. TACK SHED - CONTINUOUS

55

WESLEY throws open the door.

No sign of LILLY.

He scans quickly. Her saddle's missing. The bridle, too. Her
helmet is still on the hook.

WESLEY

Shit.

He runs to the paddock gate where TEX usually grazes.

Empty.

His heart sinks.

WESLEY (CONT'D)

(yelling)

Sam! She's gone after that crazy
woman!

SAM runs over, chest tightening.

SAM

Damn it. It's not safe out there.
You heard what Shannon said. If
OLK's really trying to twist them,

WESLEY
(cutting him off, urgent)
I don't give a shit about any of
that. I just need find Lilly. Get
the horses!

SAM
I'll get the bike.

WESLEY
(running toward the shed)
You need to ride a horse, there's
no way you're getting a bike down
in that country.

SAM pauses, then nods, the weight of the moment hitting him.
He turns and runs after WESLEY toward the tack shed.

56

EXT. BASE OF THE GORGE - AFTERNOON

56

Cliffs loom high above, carved by time into jagged walls.
A waterfall crashes into a deep black pool.
Mist curls through the gorge.
Ancient. Watching.
At the base of the cliffs sits a massive GOLDEN ROCK.
Half buried beneath roots and stone.
Golden cracks pulse faintly beneath its surface. Like a heart
refusing to stop beating.
OLK stands before it.
Motionless.
DROCHAN watches from a dead branch overhead. Silent.
OLK reaches out. Places his hand against the stone.
The golden cracks brighten beneath his fingertips.
A distant WHINNY drifts through the gorge.
Barely audible. OLK closes his eyes.
Listening.

For the first time, the hard edges leave his face.

OLK
CROITHE.

The light pulses beneath his hand.

OLK kneels beside the stone. Like a man sitting beside a grave.

OLK (CONT'D)
She has never stopped searching for
you. Across deserts. Across oceans.
Across centuries.

The light flickers.

OLK studies it.

OLK (CONT'D)
Not once.

His hand remains against the stone.

OLK (CONT'D)
Do you know what she had? A place
beside her. A purpose. Someone
waiting for her.

The light pulses softly. OLK lowers his gaze.

OLK (CONT'D)
You.

A long silence. The waterfall thunders in the distance.

OLK (CONT'D)
The spirits followed her.
The land followed her. Even now...
You follow her.

The light glows brighter.

OLK waits.

Hope flickers.

Then the glow begins to fade.

The old wound returns.

OLK (CONT'D)
They always chose her.

His fingers curl against the stone.

OLK (CONT'D)

The warriors. The spirits. The
land. Even you.

The light retreats deeper into the rock.

Pulling away.

Rejecting him.

OLK rises slowly.

The wind begins to stir.

OLK (CONT'D)

And what of the others? Those left
behind. Those buried and forgotten.
Those who cried out and nobody
came.

DROCHAN shifts above him. Watching.

OLK (CONT'D)

They build their families.
Their communities. Their stories.
While the forgotten watch from the
shadows.

His voice hardens.

OLK (CONT'D)

I know what it is to stand outside
the light. To watch others belong.
To watch others be chosen.

The wind grows stronger. Dust dances across the rocks.

OLK (CONT'D)

She was born of flame. And I... Was
born of ash.

Silence.

The stone offers no answer.

No comfort. No acceptance. Nothing.

OLK steps closer. His voice barely above a whisper.

OLK (CONT'D)

Look at me.

Nothing. The light remains still.

OLK (CONT'D)
For once... Look at me.

Nothing.

The last trace of hope leaves him.

Pain twists into anger.

OLK slams his fist into the stone.

Golden light erupts from the cracks.

The gorge trembles.

DROCHAN launches into the air.

Currawongs explode from the cliffs.

Their cries echo through the valley.

WHEE-LOOO.

WHEE-LOOO.

WHEE-LOOO.

OLK throws his arms wide.

OLK
If they will not see the
forgotten... Then they will become
the forgotten.

The wind roars through the gorge.

Dust spirals skyward.

OLK (CONT'D)
I will break their certainty.
Their communities. Their faith in
one another. I will show them what
abandonment feels like.

The currawongs circle above him. A storm of black wings.

OLK (CONT'D)
This world will kneel.

His voice echoes through the gorge.

Silence answers.

The golden light disappears.

The stone sits still. Unmoved.

OLK falls to his knees.

Breathing hard. Broken.

For the briefest moment.

DROCHAN lands nearby. Watching. Waiting.

OLK lowers his head.

OLK (CONT'D)
You will see me.

DROCHAN lets out a single cry.

WHEE-LOOO.

CUT TO:

57 **EXT. GORGE COUNTRY - SUNSET**

57

A sweeping view of the vast gorge country, endless ridges folding into each other like ocean waves frozen in stone. Red rock cliffs tower over snaking gullies. The earth is raw, ancient, unforgiving.

EPONA is a tinny speck in the vast bush land, riding CATHAN along a narrow ridge.

58 **EXT. BUSH LAND 1 - SUNSET (CONTINUOUS)**

58

Dappled light flickers through the high canopy. Pale gum trunks rise tall and ghostly, bark peeling in long strips.

The ground is soft with dry leaf litter. Tall grass whips against CATHAN's legs as he weaves through the bush.

EPONA rides bareback. No saddle, no bridle. Just trust.

She sits tall, her white hair now loose, catching the sun light with a faint, silvery shimmer.

At her side, strapped across her back, is the CORNUCOPIA, glinting with quiet power.

Her expression is focused. Present. Something has shifted, a strength surges through her.

Above the trees, a disturbance. A flock of CURRAWONGS circles in the sky ahead, black shapes slicing through the sunlight.

One call pierces the quiet, DROCHAN, leading them.

DROCHAN

WHEE-LOOO!

EPONA tightens her grip on CATHAN's mane. She whispers so softly its almost silent.

EPONA

Just a bit further. Before the dark.

They push forward, deeper into the bush, shadows growing longer around them.

59

EXT. DENSE BUSHLAND - DUSK

59

The bush closes in. Tall gum trees stand thick together, their trunks blackened by old fires. Long grass brushes the stirrups. Grass trees rise from the ground like old watchmen.

WESLEY and SAM ride single file, weaving slowly through the thick undergrowth. Ducking low branches, pushing slowly through the undergrowth.

Each of their stock saddles is loaded, a bedroll behind, swags tied down, and a small pack secured to the back. The leather creaks with each step.

They are riding into harsh country, the kind that doesn't forgive mistakes.

SAM

(grimacing)

This is extreme tree-dodging on four legs.

WESLEY

That's why bikes don't make it out here.

SAM

Yeah well, bikes don't randomly
stop and eat grass either.
Bloody horse has a mind of its own.

WESLEY

That's the point.
They see things we don't.

SAM

(grumbling)
Still reckon this saddle's chewing
through my arse. I should've just
wrapped my thighs in sandpaper and
walked.

WESLEY

The saddle's fine. You're just
soft. It was built for this
country. They pioneered the country
in stock saddles.

SAM

You mean invaded.

WESLEY

Yeah, right'o. I didn't though.

No more is said.

They push through another dense patch. Grass whips at their
legs.

SAM

(softer)
We're running outta light. We won't
be able to see soon.

They come to a crest. The land drops away sharply in front of
them. A steep, rocky ridge stretching into thicker, darker
bush.

Both men pull up, staring down the slope.

WESLEY

This is where it gets serious.

SAM peers down, eyes wide.

SAM

What? We're not goin' down that?

WESLEY
(stern)
We need to find Lil.

He clicks his horse on. The horse moves forward without hesitation, picking its way down the slope.

SAM stays put a second longer, looking on in disbelief.

WESLEY (CONT'D)
(yelling back to SAM)
Just put your legs forward, lean
back, those knee pads 'll stop you
sliding off over his head.

WESLEY is already halfway down, steady and controlled in the saddle.

SAM hesitates at the top, looking down the steep, rocky slope.

SAM
(under his breath)
This is steep enough to need a
seatbelt.

He clicks his horse forward. The horse picks its way down carefully, but the first jolt sends SAM bouncing.

SAM (CONT'D)
(shouting)
Bloody hell! Just coz you're a
Cowboy

WESLEY
(yelling back)
Move with the horse! Feel its body,
go with it! Feet forward, lean
back! Let it carry you! I'm no
Cowboy, I'm a Stockman.

SAM grips tight, struggling to stay centered.

SAM grits his teeth

He adjusts, loosening up, not perfect, but improving.

By the time they reach the bottom, he's more balanced.

SAM
(half impressed, half
grumbling)
(MORE)

SAM (CONT'D)

Alright... I get it. Still feels
like I've been kicked by a fridge.

WESLEY glances over, almost smiling.

They ride on through the bush with the sun almost
disappeared.

61

EXT. BUSH LAND 1 - SUNSET (CONTINUED)

61

Through the trees, LILLY rides TEX, gripping her reins
tightly. Nervous. Determined. Searching.

Movement catches her eye.

LILLY

Epona?

The little Kangaroo emerges from the scrub.

LILLY (CONT'D)

What are you doing out here.

The little kangaroo looks around startled and scared.

Then bounds off through the bush. as if to warn her.

TEX snorts. His ears flick forward. Uneasy.

Above them, DROCHAN lands silently on a twisted branch.

Watching.

DROCHAN

WHEE-LOOO.

Another CURRAWONG joins him.

Then another.

Then another.

A gathering. Watching. Waiting.

LILLY shivers.

LILLY

It's just a bird.

TEX exhales sharply. His muscles tense beneath her.

The bush falls silent.

A coldness moves through the trees.

Ahead. A figure emerges.

Tall. Still. Wrapped in shadow.

OLK.

He stops amongst the trunks.

Watching her.

LILLY freezes.

TEX takes a nervous step backwards.

OLK studies her.

The oversized hat with the ginny fowl feathers.

The small hands gripping the reins.

The determination trying to hide the fear.

For a moment he says nothing.

LILLY
Who are you?

OLK doesn't answer.

He keeps looking at her.

Something flickers behind his eyes.

A memory. A wound.

Gone almost instantly.

DROCHAN lets out another cry.

WHEE-LOOO.

OLK'S expression hardens.

LILLY
I want my dad.

The words hang in the air.

OLK looks away.

Just for a moment.

His jaw tightens.

Then he looks back.

The softness gone. Buried.

OLK

So did I.

LILLY doesn't understand.

TEX suddenly stamps and throws his head. Danger. Instinct.

OLK takes a step forward.

The shadows seem to move with him.

OLK (CONT'D)

You shouldn't have come here.

TEX rears violently.

Screaming.

LILLY

(screaming)

Aaaaah!

OLK lunges. The bush erupts around them.

Birds explode from the trees.

LILLY'S scream carries through the valley.

CUT TO

65

EXT. GORGE COUNTRY - NIGHT

65

Moonlight spills through the trees, casting soft silver onto rocks and branches. Shadows twist between tall gums and scrub.

EPONA rides CATHAN, weaving through the scrub like a phantom. Her white hair shimmers in the moonlight, her face alert, searching.

She pulls up suddenly. On the track ahead — LILLY'S HAT.

She slides off CATHAN and picks it up, fingers trembling. Her breath quickens.

A few steps away, TEX stands alone, reins trailing in the dirt. His breaths deeply. His head is low. He is still and vulnerable.

EPONA approaches. She places a hand to his forehead.

She hears the screeching cry of CURRAWONGS in her ears.

EPONA reels slightly. Her knees soften. She's felt it.

She steadies herself. Tightens her grip on the CORNUCOPIA. Her face hardens.

DAICHI appears.

Stepping from the trees like a shadow, tall, armoured, ancient.

DAICHI
He means to make a sacrifice.

EPONA
Lilly?

DAICHI nods solemnly.

DAICHI
He believes her light will open the spirit's gate.

EPONA's jaw tightens.

She looks at TEX, then back to DAICHI.

DAICHI (CONT'D)
There is little time. The spirits stir, some are listening. But many are turning.

EPONA places LILLY'S hat gently across the saddle pumal.

She swings onto CATHAN in one fluid motion, bareback and poised.

She nudges CATHAN forward. They surge forward in to a canter, hooves thudding against the earth.

TEX, as if stirred by instinct, follows, his stride strong, faithful.

DAICHI steps back into the trees, disappearing into shadow.

The moonlight dances through the canopy as EPONA and TEX ride fast, weaving between the ghost gums.

From above, another call:

DROCHAN (O.S.)
WHEE-LOOO!

It echoes like a warning, slicing through the forest night.

EPONA leans low over CATHAN'S neck, eyes burning.

They vanish into the dark.

CUT TO BLACK.

66

EXT. GORGE COUNTRY, CAMPFIRE - NIGHT

66

WESLEY squats beside the fire, feeding it a dry stick. SAM waddles over, eases himself down onto a log with a grunt.

WESLEY smirks.

WESLEY
(laughing)
You right?

SAM
It's not funny.
I'd take a muffler burn over this
any day.

He shifts, trying to find a better spot.

A shadow flickers between the trees, catching SAM's attention.

SAM (CONT'D)
(to himself)
Walumarra...

Sparks float upward into the still night.

SAM (CONT'D)
My pop used to talk about this
place. My people gathered here.
We're sun people.

WESLEY
Yeah?.

SAM
These spirits... they were taken
too early.
(MORE)

SAM (CONT'D)
I feel like I should honour them,
but I don't know how.

WESLEY looks at SAM, something shifting, vulnerability,
respect.

WESLEY
I'm terrified.

SAM
I know.
We're gonna find her.

They sit in silence, fire crackling softly between them.

SAM watches the shadows in behind the trees, WESLEY stares in
to the flames.

67

EXT. JOHNS HOUSE - EARLY MORNING

67

The first light of dawn creeps over the horizon. Mist clings
low in the paddocks.

JOHN'S house sits nestled in the farmland.

A car roars up the driveway towards the house dust trailing
behind it.

INT. JOHN'S KITCHEN - MORNING (CONTINUOUS)

JOHN at the table still dressed in his dirty work cloths from
the day before.

He hears a a car out side screeching to a stop.

He gets up and heads to the front door to door.

He grabs his hat that is hanging on the rack and places it
firmly on his head, graps his jack and starts putting it on
as he walks out the door.

68

EXT. JOHN'S HOUSE - EARLY MORNING

68

A little sedan car door flys open.

SHANNON flings the little front gate open and storms towards
the house.

John is standing at the top of the stairs watching her.

SHANNON
Where's Sam?!

JOHN
(squinting)
What?

SHANNON
He didn't come home last night. I
knew it... I bet you they've gone
out to Gins Leap, chasing spirit
horse.
(beat)
They better not've taken Lilly with
'em. John, I can feel it, those
spirits... It's not right.

JOHN just stares at her, wide-eyed.

JOHN
Yeah

SHANNON
Yeah what?

JOHN
Their gone. Even that drunk bird
from the pub.

SHANNON
What?!

She turns to walk down the path.

SHANNON (CONT'D)
Well come on! Get ya boots on.
We're gonna have to go after 'em.

She storms off toward JOHN'S Ute, JAY'S legs striding to keep
up.

JOHN stands in the doorway, still half-asleep, looking down
at his socks. He mutters to himself

JOHN
Jezz, she's bossy.

SHANNON
I heard that! hurry up!

He shakes his head, startled she heard him, he gets up walks
to the door that has been open all night.

He grabs his had and slamming it on his head. He grabs a shirt that is hanging at the door.

He throws it on as he strides after SHANNON.

69 **EXT. DEEP GORGE COUNTRY - EARLY MORNING**

69

The vastness of the bush stretches in every direction. Pale mist winds through the gullies. Towering gums, their long shadows across dense undergrowth.

Tiny figures move through the land. EPONA on CATHAN, with TEX trailing behind, LILLY'S small stock saddle strapped tight, her hat tied to the pommel.

They weave through the dense bush. Up ahead, voices, faint and familiar.

70 **EXT. GORGE COUNTRY, CAMPFIRE - MORNING**

70

SAM and WESLEY saddle their horses, gearing up to continue the search.

SAM hauls the saddle onto his horse's back with a grunt.

SAM

Back in the torture seat.

A rustle from the bushes. They freeze.

EPONA rides in on CATHAN. Dusty. Focused.

TEX follows behind.

WESLEY

Lil!

He runs to TEX, then stops. No rider. Just the empty saddle.

He turns back to EPONA, confused and tense.

He is confused, and looks to EPONA.

WESLEY (CONT'D)

Where is she?

EPONA

OLK has her.

SAM, hearing this, quietly steps away toward the twisted tree where he saw shadows the night before.

WESLEY

What do you mean OLK has her?
This isn't the time for your voodoo
crap!

**BUSH EDGE -
CONTINUOUS**

SAM approaches the twisted tree.

Morning light slips through its branches.

At the base, a long, hand-carved SPEAR rests in the roots as
if it's been waiting for him.

CUT TO CAMPFIRE:

The faint glint of EPONA's armour catches WESLEY's eye. he
shoots her a puzzled glance, unsure what to make of it.

**CUT TO BUSH
EDGE:**

SAM steps forward, places his hand on the wood. Lifts it.

He studies the spear, then glances into the bush.

SAM

Thanks, old man. I'll use it right.

BACK TO CAMPFIRE

EPONA

You have to believe me. If we're
going to save her.

SAM returns, spear in hand.

SAM

This is real and we need to believe
it.

WESLEY eyes the spear.

WESLEY

Where the hell did you get that?

SAM

Walumarra.

WESLEY looks from SAM to EPONA. She looks different now,
stronger. Grounded. Armoured. No longer the drunk woman from
the pub.

SAM stands tall, confident, holding the spear like it belongs to him.

WESLEY'S shoulders soften, he exhales a deep breath.

WESLEY

Okay. I believe you.
And if this OLK really has Lil...
I'm willing to serve a life
sentence.

SAM walks to his horse and ties the spear to the saddle.

He mounts, not as fluid as EPONA, but steady. He winces, settles in, then sits tall.

He nods to WESLEY.

71 EXT. BASE OF THE GORGE: DAY

71

The gorge is silent.

Mist crawls across the rocks.

At its centre, the GOLDEN ROCK rises from the earth.

LILLY sits against it.

Arms wrapped around her knees. Trying not to cry.

Her hat is gone.

Dust covers her clothes.

DROCHAN perches on a twisted rock nearby.

Watching.

LILLY

(whispers)

Dad...

A faint golden glow appears beneath her.

LILLY freezes.

She looks down.

Thin cracks of light spread through the rock.

The glow grows brighter.

The wind begins to move through the gorge.

Mist drifts toward the rock.

Curling around it.

LILLY pushes herself away from the stone.

The glow fades.

She stops.

The glow returns.

Brighter than before.

LILLY stares.

Confused.

OLK watches from nearby.

His eyes fixed on the rock.

The light spreads further through the cracks.

More mist rolls down into the gorge.

Shapes flicker within it.

Gone before they fully form.

DROCHAN shifts on the rock.

The feathers on the back of his neck rise.

The golden light pulses.

Once.

Twice.

Three times.

The ground gives a slight tremor.

Pebbles tumble down the rock face.

LILLY begins to cry.

The light flares brighter.

OLK takes a step toward the rock.

DROCHAN suddenly snaps his head toward the trees.

Still.

Listening.

DROCHAN
WHEE-LOOO! WHEE-LOOO!

The currawong launches into the air.

Circling toward the ridge.

OLK turns.

Following the bird with his eyes.

He grabs LILLY'S arm and pulls her away from the rock.

The golden light immediately fades. The mist begins to thin.

OLK stares into the trees.

Waiting.

75

EXT. GORGE FLOOR - DAY

75

Dark cliffs rise around the gorge, ancient and watchful. At their centre sits the GOLDEN ROCK, half buried in the earth, its surface cracked by age and time.

OLK stands before it alone.

Above him, DROCHAN circles against the sky, his cry echoing from the stone walls.

A wind moves through the gorge.

Dust lifts from the earth. Leaves tumble across the ground. The trees along the ridgeline sway as though something deep beneath the land has stirred.

OLK closes his eyes and listens.

For centuries he has wandered alone, carrying his anger through kingdoms, wars and generations. For centuries he has called to the forgotten.

Now, for the first time, something answers.

The wind strengthens. Currawongs rise from the cliffs and wheel overhead, their shadows sweeping across the gorge floor like dark waves.

OLK slowly opens his eyes.

OLK
The world forgot you.

The birds continue to circle.

OLK (CONT'D)
Buried your stories. Your names.
Your grief.

The wind gathers around the golden stone.

OLK watches it, barely daring to believe.

OLK (CONT'D)
But I remember.

A powerful gust tears through the gorge.

The birds surge higher.

The trees bend.

For a fleeting moment the entire landscape feels alive.

OLK looks toward the sky, toward the circling birds and the moving wind.

The bitterness that has defined him for centuries eases.

Just slightly.

The closest thing to hope he has known in a very long time.

OLK (CONT'D)
At last.

DROCHAN cries out.

The sound echoes through the gorge as the currawongs rise higher still.

OLK stands motionless before the golden stone, believing he has finally been heard.

72

EXT. EDGE OF BUSH LAND GOING TO THE GORGE - DAY

72

The UTE rattles along the edge of the property, paddocks thinning into dry scrub. In the distance, the land collapses into rough gorge country. Wind hums through the broken grass. JOHN, stiff and silent, grips the wheel. SHANNON sits beside him, JAY on her lap. They reach the boundary fence. The ute shudders to a stop.

JOHN

That's it. Can't drive any further.

They climb out. Wind through grass. Crows in the distance.

JOHN walks to the fence, gripping the wire.

Eyes fixed ahead.

JOHN (CONT'D)

If they'd found her, they'd be back by now.

SHANNON

So Lil' ran off after that woman from the pub?

JOHN

Yeah. Chasing ghosts.

SHANNON studies him.

SHANNON

It's not like you to be this rattled.

JOHN doesn't look at her.

JOHN

She's just a little girl.
This is my fault.
My stories made her think something
always comes to save us.

SHANNON

John...

JOHN

She's my granddaughter.

SHANNON stills.

SHANNON

Wesley?

JOHN nods.

JOHN

He's my son.

Wind moves between them.

JOHN (CONT'D)

I loved his mother once.
Thought we'd have a life. Then she
left town. When she came back...
she wouldn't see me. She got sick
not long after. Only later I found
out she'd had a baby. My baby.
Taken from her.
Said it was for the best.

JOHN swallows.

JOHN (CONT'D)

Took me years to find him.
By then life had already knocked
him around. Wife gone. Little girl
to raise. Too much pain already
there.
So I gave him what I could.
Work. A roof.

JOHN takes his hat off and touches the ginny fowl feathers on
in they are the same as what is on LILLY'S hat.

SHANNON softens.

SHANNON

My grandmother was taken too.
Sometimes feels like this country's
built on loss like that.

JOHN finally looks at her.

JOHN

Guess we all got pieces missing.

SHANNON

Yeah.
But we can still hold each other
up. Can't change history.
Maybe we can stop it repeating.

JOHN looks back across the gorge.

JOHN
 Everything I'm doing on this
 place...
 Is to leave something steadier for
 them. Not everyone agrees with what
 I'm doin'.

SHANNON studies him

SHANNON
 Is that what happen to your car and
 the reason you were camped out on
 the varandah last night.

JOHN nods slowly

SHANNON softens with a smile

SHANNON (CONT'D)
 I see it now.

John frowns.

SHANNON (CONT'D)
 Wesley's going to look just like
 you when he gets old. Not sure he
 will be too pleased about that.

John gives the smallest smile.

They both stare out toward the gorge.

They cannot go further.

But they stand there anyway.

73

EXT. GORGE RIDGE TRAIL - DAY

73

The sound of pounding hooves thunders through the bush.

Branches whip past. Leaves scatter.

EPONA, WESLEY, and SAM ride fast, weaving through twisted
 gums and dense undergrowth.

CATHAN leads, fluid and swift beneath EPONA. Her hair streams
 behind her, wild and untamed.

Behind her, WESLEY leans low into his saddle, focused, hands
 gripped tight on the reins.

SAM, bouncing hard in the saddle, clings for dear life.

They break through a clearing.

Ahead, the trees part.

The ground drops away sharply, a jagged ridge falling into a wide, fractured basin below.

Above it, a dark funnel of CURRAWONGS spirals in chaos, shrieking.

They pull up at the top of the ridge.

EPONA gasps, her body jolting upright.

A sharp RINGING screams in her ears.

Her hand grips the CORNUCOPIA. She trembles, staring ahead.

SAM
(wheezing)
Please tell me that's not what I
think it is...

WESLEY
(concerned)
You alright?

EPONA steadies herself. Her jaw clenches. She breathes deep.

EPONA
She's close.

She clicks her tongue.

CATHAN surges forward – charging down the steep slope, surefooted and fierce.

WESLEY urges his horse on after her.

SAM peers over the edge, grimacing.

SAM
Not again... nope. Nope!

WESLEY
We're Aussies mate. We do this
together or not at all.

SAM follows. Not gracefully, but determined.

EPONA reaches the bottom of the slope. She blazing like a flame through shadow, charging towards OLK.

74

EXT. GORGE RIDGE - DAY

74

WALUMARRA stands alone on a rocky outcrop overlooking the vast gorge below.

The bush is unusually still.

No birds call.

No insects hum.

Only the wind moves through the trees, whispering across the ridgeline and through the dry grass.

Then—

DROCHAN'S cry cuts through the silence.

DROCHAN (O.S.)
WHEE-LOOO!

The sound echoes from cliff to cliff.

WALUMARRA remains motionless.

Listening.

His eyes move slowly across the landscape, reading the land as though it were speaking directly to him.

WALUMARRA
(softly)
The land remembers.

So do I.

Another cry echoes across the gorge.

WALUMARRA takes a slow breath, his gaze fixed on the distant tree line.

Something is changing.

Something long buried is stirring.

WALUMARRA (CONT'D)
The boy must be ready to become a man.

A faint breeze moves through the dry leaves behind him.

Almost nothing.

Yet WALUMARRA turns slightly, acknowledging the presence as though someone stands just beyond sight.

WALUMARRA (CONT'D)
(quietly)
If you're watching... now is the
time.

For a moment he stands in silence, looking out across Country.

Then he turns and begins his descent into the gorge.

Unhurried.

Certain.

The wind moves through the trees above him as he disappears into the bush, following a path only he seems to know.

EXT. GORGE FLOOR - DAY

Dark cliffs rise around the gorge, ancient and watchful.

LILLY sits beside the GOLDEN ROCK, bruised and frightened, her arms wrapped tightly around her knees.

Above her, DROCHAN circles against the sky, his cry echoing from the stone walls.

DROCHAN
WHEE-LOOO.

A breeze stirs through the gorge.

At first it is subtle. Dust lifts from the earth. Leaves tumble across the ground. Grass bends gently around the stone.

LILLY looks around uneasily.

The wind brushes through her hair and gathers around her, moving through the gorge as though drawn to the child.

OLK watches.

OLK
The world forgot you.

The breeze strengthens, sweeping through the trees and across the ridgelines before returning to the rock.

OLK (CONT'D)
But I remember.

The movement continues around LILLY.

Never settling. Never still.

The GOLDEN ROCK gives a faint pulse beneath her.

OLK takes a step forward.

The wind settles immediately.

Leaves fall still.

The pulse fades.

He stops.

A moment later the breeze returns.

Stronger than before.

DROCHAN suddenly cries out.

DROCHAN
WHEE-LOOO!

The wind shifts.

LILLY looks up.

At the edge of the gorge stands WALUMARRA.

For the first time since being taken, some of the fear leaves her face.

WALUMARRA begins his descent into the gorge, moving steadily down the rocky slope. The breeze follows him through the trees, lifting leaves and dust in his wake.

OLK watches. Silent. Waiting.

WALUMARRA reaches LILLY and places a hand gently on her shoulder.

LILLY closes her eyes.

The trembling in her hands begins to ease.

Around them, the wind settles into a soft, steady movement.

Grass sways at their feet. The leaves drift slowly across the earth.

WALUMARRA lifts his eyes to OLK.

WALUMARRA
(First Nations Language)
You still have a choice.

OLK says nothing.

His gaze moves from WALUMARRA to LILLY, then out across the gorge.

The breeze continues to move through the trees.

Past WALUMARRA.

Past LILLY.

Never lingering with him.

A long silence hangs between them.

OLK'S hand slowly closes around the dagger at his side.
WALUMARRA sees it.

WALUMARRA (CONT'D)
No.

The word echoes through the gorge. Something breaks inside OLK.

OLK
You chose her!

The wind rises sharply.

Dust whips across the gorge floor.

Branches sway overhead.

OLK (CONT'D)
Again.

You always choose them.

He lunges.

Grabbing LILLY before WALUMARRA can react.

She screams.

WALUMARRA rushes forward.

Too late.

OLK drags her toward the GOLDEN ROCK and throws her onto it.

The earth shudders beneath them.

The wind stops. Instantly. Silence.

No movement.

No birds.

No sound.

OLK stands over LILLY, breathing hard, the dagger trembling in his hand.

OLK (CONT'D)

If you will not choose me... Then choose.

The gorge remains motionless.

Then - The sound of HOOVES.

Fast Approaching.

SMASH CUT TO:

77

EXT. GORGE ENTRANCE - DAY (CONTINUOUS)

77

EPONA and CATHAN bursts through the treeline at the far end of the gorge, a blaze of silver and fury. Her white hair streams behind her, CORNUCOPIA glowing in one hand.

They charge towards OLK.

OLK spots her, he grins and charges towards her.

LILLY sees the edge of the bush. She crawls toward it, finding a fallen log. She curls behind it, hiding.

EPONA leaps from CATHAN, slamming into OLK mid-run, they tumble across the dust and rocks.

OLK snarls, throws her off with brute force. EPONA hits the ground, winded.

Suddenly WALUMARRA appears, Silent. Proud.

Their eyes lock.

He nods once, then hurls the WADDY WAR CLUB.

(A WADDY WAR CLUB, ancient, carved from dark wood, etched with markings of deep power).

It spins through the air.

EPONA catches it mid-motion, rolls to her feet, and charges.

LILLY peers over the log, trembling.

EPONA swings The WADDY WAR CLUB.

OLK dodges, laughing.

She swings again, grazes his shoulder.

A brutal rhythm builds, blow for blow, dirt flying, grunts and fury, two ancient forces colliding.

Then... OLK slams her aside. She stumbles.

He spins, knocks the WADDY from her grip.

It skids across the rock.

She's defenceless.

He raises his arm, about to strike.

WESLEY and SAM appear at the edge of the gorge, breathless, wide-eyed, frozen at the sight.

WESLEY scans the ground – searching.

He sees LILLY. Their eyes lock.

He signals for her to stay down. Don't move.

OLK towers over EPONA.

WESLEY doesn't wait. He leaps from his horse and charges.

LILLY
(Screaming)
No...

OLK turns at the sound, eyes narrowing on LILLY.

WESLEY crashes into OLK's back.

OLK snarls, amused.

He tosses WESLEY across the rocks like a ragdoll.

WESLEY groans, tries to rise. OLK kicks him down. Punches. Beats him. Hard.

EPONA watches, powerless.

SAM stare in horror.

LILLY presses down behind the log.

Then –

A wind passes over them, low and powerful.

It moves past OLK, WESLEY, and EPONA.

Their eyes follow the wind.

WALUMARRA stands on the rock where CROITHE'S spirit is trapped.

He raises the WADDY high – and slams it down.

Above, his EAGLE soars in, wings wide. It screams as the WADDY hits the stone.

The rock explodes with light.

A golden pulse ripples out.

CURRAWONGS dive chaotically toward the glow, but they cannot hold the light back.

The spirits shift, confused, shaken.

From the heart of the stone, a golden pendant bursts free, beaming light that transforms through silhouettes of spirit-light.

CROITHE emerges, magnificent, radiant, glowing with spirit-fire.

She gallops straight to EPONA... Reunited.

CROITHE nuzzles EPONA, lifting her gently. Together, they turn to face OLK.

But OLK has WESLEY on his knees. OLK tightens his grip in WESLEY'S hair, forcing his head back.

WESLEY winces. Blood runs from a cut above his eye.

OLK stares at EPONA. Not at CROITHE. Not at the spirits.

Only EPONA.

OLK
You always choose them. Mortals.
Strays. Broken things.

He presses the blade against WESLEY'S throat.

OLK (CONT'D)
Every age. Every lifetime. Always
the same.

EPONA
Let him go.

OLK laughs. But there is pain in it now. Not rage. Pain.

OLK
You never could help yourself.
Always finding something wounded to
save. EPONA takes a cautious step
forward.

EPONA
This isn't who you are.

OLK
You don't know who I am.
You never did.

The CURRAWONGS circle above. Uneasy. Restless.

WESLEY looks between them. Confused.

LILLY peers from behind the log. The wind begins to rise.

OLK (CONT'D)
You had the horse. You had your
warriors. You had your people. You
had a place in the world.

His grip tightens.

OLK (CONT'D)
What did I have?

EPONA freezes. Something in his voice. A memory. A wound.
Something familiar.

EPONA
Who are you?

OLK smiles. A sad smile. The smile of a man who already knows
the answer.

OLK
All these centuries... and you
still don't see me. He steps
closer. The blade still pressed
against WESLEY'S throat.

OLK (CONT'D)
They called you daughter of the
sun. The chosen one. The pure one.
The one destined to lead.

His eyes fill with bitterness.

OLK (CONT'D)
And they left me standing in your
shadow.

A flicker passes across EPONA'S face. Recognition. A memory
buried beneath centuries.

EPONA
No...

OLK laughs softly.

OLK
There she is. Finally. You
remember. EPONA stares at him. Not
the monster. Not the demon. The boy
he once was.

EPONA
Brother...

Silence. Even the wind seems to stop.

SAM stares.

WESLEY stares.

LILLY doesn't fully understand. But she knows this changes
everything.

OLK closes his eyes for a moment. Almost relieved.

OLK
The first honest thing you've said
to me in a thousand years.

His voice breaks. Only slightly.

OLK (CONT'D)
Brother.

The word hangs in the air. Heavy. Painful. EPONA takes another step.

EPONA
I searched for you.

OLK
No. You searched for her. He looks to CROITHE.

OLK (CONT'D)
You searched for your horse.
For your warriors. For your purpose. But never for me.

EPONA shakes her head. Tears forming.

EPONA
I begged you to come with me.

OLK
And live beneath your light?
Live as your shadow? Never. His anger rises again. But now the audience understands it. It isn't hatred. It's hurt.

OLK (CONT'D)
They chose you. Every time. The spirits. The people. The world.

He looks around at WESLEY. LILLY. SAM. CROITHE.

OLK (CONT'D)
They still choose you.

His eyes settle on WESLEY.

OLK (CONT'D)
Even now.

EPONA'S voice softens.

EPONA
You didn't have to walk alone.

The words hit him. Harder than any weapon. For a moment...

The monster disappears. Only a lonely brother remains.

The CURRAWONGS falter. Turning away. Leaving him.

OLK looks up. Confused. Afraid. For the first time.

OLK
No... Stay. I command you.

The birds continue leaving. The darkness is abandoning him.

OLK (CONT'D)
Stay!

A spear whistles through the air.

THUNK.

It pierces OLK straight through the heart.

Silence.

OLK freezes.

The blade slips from his hand.

WESLEY falls forward. Free.

OLK slowly looks down at the spear. Then up. At EPONA.

Not rage. Not fury. Only sadness.

OLK (CONT'D)
We were born of the same fire...

His knees buckle. He falls.

The CURRAWONGS scatter into the sky.

The wind dies. Silence.

EPONA does not move.

CROITHE steps forward. Gentle.

EPONA slowly dismounts.

She walks towards her brother.

The others hang back. Giving her space.

OLK lies motionless.

The anger gone.

The bitterness gone.

Only peace remains.

EPONA kneels beside him. Places a hand on his chest.

A faint ember of darkness rises from him. Not evil. Not hatred. Grief. Ancient grief.

It drifts into the wind. Disappearing. EPONA'S eyes fill with tears.

EPONA
(whisper)
You didn't have to walk alone.

A single tear falls onto his chest.
The earth beneath him begins to brighten.
The land exhales. The curse breaks.
For the first time in centuries...
Both of them are free.

FADE OUT.

78

EXT. BUSH EDGE TO FARM LAND - EVENING

78

Golden light floods through the trees as EPONA, SAM, WESLEY, and LILLY ride slowly out of the bush.

The landscape opens. The farm stretches in the distance. The horses tails flicking, dust rising soft at the hooves.

WESLEY looks to SAM with curiosity.

WESLEY
(To SAM through gritted his teeth from pain).
Where'd you learn to throw like that?
■■■■■■■■■■■■■■■SAM
Dunno. Guess it's just in me.
...That, and I still got my javelin medal from Year Eight.

They softly chuckle to one another.

In the distance, the sound of a UTE rattling toward them. Dust billows. The old ute bounces over the track, brakes squealing as it pulls up.

Behind the wheel is JOHN. In the passenger seat is SHANNON, with JAY on her lap.

They step out. SHANNON marches toward the riders, shaking her head. JAY jumps out following her.

JOHN slowly walks to them.

SHANNON

What were you thinking?

She pause and sighs brushing them off not really wanting to hear the answer.

SHANNON (CONT'D)

No, don't tell me. You're all mad.
Those spirits down there... they're
angry. Lost.
They never had a proper burial.
They haven't passed on.

The group dismounts slowly.

SAM steps forward, the spear still strapped across his back.

SAM

You're right. They were lost.
But not angry... not really.
They're calling out, they want
peace.
They just... needed someone to
guide 'em home.

SHANNON looks at him for a long moment. Something in SAM has changed, grounded, strong, clear.

She leaps at him hugging him.

SHANNON

Do they rest now?

SAM nods softly.

SHANNON throws her arms around him.

WESLEY puts a hand on LILLY's shoulder. She looks up at him, beaming.

EPONA watches quietly. CROITHE stands beside her, luminous.

EPONA

The darkness we carry... it doesn't
have to define us. We can choose
differently.
For them.
(pause, looking to LILLY and JAY)
For what comes next.

JOHN nods slowly. There's a flicker of something in his glance toward WESLEY – heavy with things unsaid.

WESLEY meets it, silent. A flicker of recognition... maybe understanding.

SHANNON, watching, breaks the moment – dry, but honest:

SHANNON

We've all got some history to sort out. Maybe now's a good time to start.

No one answers. They don't need to.

LILLY climbs onto TEX.

EPONA mounts CROITHE – one final ride.

The group moves off together, horses, people, spirits united.

Above them, the sky burns orange, a new day on the horizon.

In the distance, DROCHAN circles silently, then peels away, soaring toward the mountains.

The land breathes again.

FADE OUT.