

FADE IN:

INT. BEACH HOUSE. DINING ROOM. DAY

1

OLIVIA "OLLIE" GREY sits at a large wooden table. It is the fixture of a small room untouched by technology. A woody retreat surrounded by the sounds and scents of Byron Bay. Huge palms sway wildly outside the straw doors.

Ollie stares blankly at the computer screen in front of her. She takes a sip from a glass cup.

For a beat, she waits - for inspiration. We wait ...

Suddenly, her fingers crack over the keyboard and words run across her laptop screen.

TC - 'THE STORY'

INT. GAS STATION. NIGHT

2

A suit with oil-like, slicked, black hair - CALEB BROWNING - walks through the aisles of a small town gas station. His heavy handed approach to cologne infiltrates the smells of the convenience stop - Tom Ford's *Vanille Tabacco* wafts through the aisles, tickling the senses.

OLLIE (V.O)

It's the time of night when the  
vampires are tired, crawling at snail  
speed. The adults are asleep. The  
night is the home for the perpetually  
exhausted.

An OLDER LADY at the till observes the MAN in the corner of the store. She wears a sallow disposition and has oily strands of long black hair. Her aura the same colour as her nickname, "SICKO". A sallow green or velvety black.

The man concocts a hedonistic mocha by pouring the cappuccino topping powder into his drink. SICKO cracks. Her face tenses, lips thinning, vicious.

SICKO

Hey! Capp topping is topping for a  
reason, you don't fucking pour half  
the contents into your drink!

MAN

It slipped. Sorry.

Caleb carefully puts down a packet of Oreos, distracted by this encounter. He carries his purchases - original Pringles and can of Coke - to the till. The older woman serves him. He smiles uncomfortably, handing her the cash. She slowly tenders it.

CALEB

You can take the change. Thanks.

SICKO

Come again.

Caleb walks out of the store, uneasy. He feels eyes following him which is confirmed as we see her gaze trailing him.

Caleb plunges into darkness.

INT. BEACH HOUSE. DINING ROOM. DAY

3

Ollie takes a sip of her coffee. She places the acrylic cup onto the table.

She takes a deep breath and glances outside, into the expansive backyard. The leafy green comforts her and she begins to cry. Her voice blends into the cacophony of Byron palms. She melts into the background.

She slams the laptop shut, scared by the future she has created.

INT. BUS. CONT'D

4

Ollie sits on the upper level of the crowded bus - B1. Loud characters bolster in the seats in front of her - a group of SKATERS with long bleached blonde hair. They carry decorated skateboards with heavily tattooed hands.

Ollie sleeps against the window. Tongue, cotton, in mouth. Limbs dead.

OLLIE

I'm tired. It's odd because for a second, in the middle of my bus ride, I actually think I can escape the crash. The three a.m. bedtimes, the nine to five days, the unwanted reflection but it settles on your shoulders, dust.

INT. BEACH HOUSE. DINING ROOM. NEXT DAY

5

The sun hovers above the horizon. A cup of coffee steams over the laptop screen. Ollie takes a sip. The coffee acts as pure energy and instantly her fingers tap across the keyboard.

Byron sounds - cockatoo caws, slapping leaves, whistles of the monsoon season.

OLLIE (V.O)

I'm sinking into the couch.

INT. DARK BAR ROOM. NIGHT

6

MARGOT sinks slowly into a velvety sofa, her eyes closing at the same luxurious speed. She is accompanied by ELLIOT. He is a handsome young man who brims with nervous energy.

Margot takes out a cigarette from her purse and purses her lips, waiting for Elliot to offer a light. He glances at her, before staring ahead, anxious.

We notice the ROUGED WOMEN in his tunnel vision. They are draped in silks and velvet, striking faces in the harsh lighting. One WOMAN pulls up her skirt, revealing lacy black stockings. She winks.

Elliot swallows, hard.

Margot lights her cigarette with a garish silver lighter.

MARGOT

I'm currently thinking about my favourite words, E. Can I call you that? Whatever. So what do you think they are?

Elliot snaps away from his fantasy.

ELLIOT

Favourite, perhaps?

MARGOT

Why would you think that? My favourite word is 'Edenic'. It was in the preface to *Paradise Lost*. My other favourite word is 'whore'. It just rolls off the tongue.

Elliot stares at Margot, shocked. He avoids her searching eyes, uncomfortable.

ELLIOT

I don't say things like that.

He doesn't sound convinced. She smiles, all knowing.

MARGOT

Sure.

ELLIOT

So do you frequent places like this, often?

MARGOT

Yes! I live and breathe with these women because they are by far some of the most ingenu people I have ever met. They all have gall, wit and charm, and frankly you have to have those qualities in their line of work. Charming fuckers - the lot of them.

Margot laughs, throwing her head back. She stamps her menthol cigarette out in Elliot's shot of absinthe.

MARGOT (CONT'D)

You know who you remind me of? He's the one in *Blue Moon*. Tired fucker. But beautiful nonetheless.

ELLIOT

Benecio Del Toro?

MARGOT

Yes! He's gorgeous. I theorise that eyebags look good on people because they're a small detail indicative of an interesting life, a signal for if you are kindred spirits. Why does burning the candle from both ends look good on some people?

Elliot nods, uncertain if complimented.

ELLIOT

Thank you.

MARGOT

I can tell what your favourite word is.

Margot's eyes grow dark. Her brow furrows, sweaty.

ELLIOT

What is it?

MARGOT

'Macabre'. I know what you want to do to them. I know you see blood.

Suddenly, Margot screams and claws the sides of her face, drawing blood. She runs her hands through her carefully made curls, creating a nest of tangle.

Elliot stands up abruptly. The intimate table gives way, collapsing to the floor. Shot glasses empty onto the carpet. He steps away slowly, scared. The rouged women notice this discordance, slowly rising to their feet - pale ghosts emerging ...

Their eyes meet for an agonising second. Margot smiles strangely - her face tattered. Elliot is frozen in time.

INT. BUS. DAY

7

Ollie's cheek presses against the frosty window. She observes PEOPLE'S actions under the cover of anonymity and unsuspecting.

Ollie faux yawns, her eyes drift to a BUSINESS WOMAN. The woman wears a powerful black two-piece suit. Apple AirPods plug her ears. Ollie's eyes flit from her to the setting sun.

OLLIE (V.O)

I'm smiling on the inside.

Ollie smiles. Her eyes flit back to the business woman.

OLLIE (V.O) (CONT'D)

Don't you think being a curated and careful person is strange? I think so. It's like wearing a hot pink bra to work. Bra strap glowing beneath your white blouse. Gold-plated jewels. You know the kind.

Ollie focuses on the waning sun.

OLLIE (V.O) (CONT'D)  
I wonder how Monet would paint an  
Australian bushfire.

INT. BEACH HOUSE. HOME. NIGHT

8

It's dark outside. Ollie cradles a cup of coffee in her hand. She sits cross-legged in front of her laptop. A familiar sight.

Ollie yawns, drowsy. She stares into the corner of the room, noticing a small statue of Mary. Was that there before? The statuette stares at her, weeping. She is covered in red lipstick imprints - a gift from Rio.

OLLIE (V.O)  
Sleep paralysis is where the angels  
creep at in the corner of your  
bedroom. They're eyes red - Luciferic.

Ollie closes her eyes and laptop. She stands up, cloaking herself with night.

Ollie raises her arms around her, a light embrace. She begins to dance, maneuvering across the floorboards lightly. Dancer's touch.

OLLIE (V.O) (CONT'D)  
The insanity hits and we slip into a  
coma where we try to read *Ulysses*,  
Dante - ye old literature - and  
suddenly we feel cheeky and laugh in  
the face of the devil. Mistakes made.  
Sins laid.