

THE TATTOOIST

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BLACK SCREEN

Lilting Pacific Island music plays. The soft, rhythmic strum of a guitar. Women SING a beautiful harmony.

FADE IN:

1 INT. SINGAPORE BAR - EVENING 1

A luminous Pacific Island scene – palm trees, hula girls and a crescent of golden sand that borders vibrant ocean, illustrated 1950s style.

PULLING BACK to reveal a Pacific tapa cloth pattern bordering a kitsch lamp-shade.

Black Sambuca swirls into a shot glass on a shiny black bar.

JAKE SAWYER, late 20s, handsome and haunted-looking, knocks the shot back and slams the glass down.

IN A DARK CORNER OF THE BAR, Jake picks up a payphone receiver. His fingers hover over the buttons, reluctant to dial ... he hangs up.

Jake picks up a leather bag from beside his bar stool. As he reaches down, we see a long, pale scar on his forearm.

2 EXT/INT. SINGAPORE STREETS/SEDAN - NIGHT 2

Rain hammers down as a dark Mercedes sedan rolls through Singapore's streets.

INSIDE, Jake watches the lights blur past the rain-streaked glass. A CHAUFFEUR drives silently.

OUTSIDE, the bustle gives way to a more stately part of town, the affluent Holland District.

3 EXT. MANSION - EVENING 3

The Mercedes pulls up outside an old property. The house reeks of both old money and new. Expansive grounds fall away into darkness beyond the haze of rain.

Jake steps out of the car. Thunder rolls overhead as he looks up at the house.

4 INT. MANSION FOYER - NIGHT 4

The Chauffeur shows Jake into a marbled foyer. A staircase sweeps up into darkness. Jake shivers.

A figure descends the stairs. MR LIM is silver haired and slight. He looks like he hasn't slept in weeks. He extends a hand.

MR LIM
Edward Lim.

JAKE
Jake Sawyer.

Jake shakes Mr Lim's hand. As he does, we see that the back of Jake's hand is covered with intricate tattoos.

MR LIM
Thank you for coming.

5 INT. MANSION LIVING ROOM - NIGHT 5

A well-appointed living room, mahogany and leather, pools of shadow. Jake sits in an armchair, flipping through a worn-looking leather journal. Mr Lim paces, wringing his hands.

MR LIM
Have you ever encountered a bad spirit, Mr Sawyer?

JAKE
(under his breath)
Almost every night.

MR LIM
It is eating him from within. So strong ... so hungry.

Unseen by Mr Lim, Jake rolls his eyes. He hands Mr Lim the journal. We can't see what's on the page.

JAKE
This is what you need.

MR LIM
(impressed)
How did you get this?

(CONTINUED)

5 CONTINUED:

5

JAKE
 (grins)
 Ed, you worry about your karma, let
 me worry about mine.

MR LIM
 It's powerful?

JAKE
 (laying it on thick)
 And strictly forbidden. I'm taking
 a big risk giving this to him.

Mr Lim hands Jake an envelope. Jake looks inside.

MR LIM
 It is enough?

Jake's eyes glint in triumph: it's more than enough.

JAKE
 Where is he?

6 INT. MANSION HALLWAY - NIGHT

6

Mr Lim leads Jake up a long, shadowy hallway. Jake approaches
 the door as if this creepy setting is all in a day's work.
 Lim opens the door.

7 INT. MANSION BEDROOM - NIGHT

7

Jake steps into the room. Candles flicker, incense burns. The
 walls and ceiling are scrawled with Chinese symbols.

A YOUNG BOY (13) sits up on the bed. He looks flu-ridden and
 miserable. Breath rattles as his scrawny chest rises and
 falls.

Seeing the child, Jake looks taken aback - clearly this
 wasn't what he expected.

From behind him, the sound of rapid, CRUNCHING FOOTSTEPS.
 Jake turns -

8 EXT. SAWYER HOUSE - NIGHT - FLASHBACK

8

Footsteps crunch through snow.

(CONTINUED)

8 CONTINUED:

8

A slender teenager runs towards a dark house: YOUNG JAKE. Behind him, a dark treeline. Out of breath, he looks back, afraid -

9 INT. MANSION BEDROOM - NIGHT

9

Jake blinks. Mr Lim watches him from the doorway.

JAKE

You never said he was a kid.

He looks back at the sick boy.

JAKE (CONT'D)

Have you seen a doctor?

MR LIM

This isn't something a doctor can cure ... but you can. Can't you?

Jake wrestles with this, then nods.

JAKE

If that's the way you want to go.

MR LIM

We must be prepared to do anything for our loved ones. Even if it causes them pain.

(to the boy)

This is the man I told you about. He's here to help us.

Jake sits down beside the boy, clearly uneasy.

JAKE

Hey, kid. I'm Jake. What's your name?

The boy watches him, wide-eyed, fearful.

JAKE (CONT'D)

(smiles)

Strong and silent type, huh?

BOY

Is this going to hurt?

Another flicker of guilt crosses Jake's face.

(CONTINUED)

JAKE

Your Dad thinks it's going to help
you get better.

BOY

What do you think?

Jake meets the boy's eyes, then looks away, unable to lie.

Jake opens his bag. A TATTOOIST'S NEEDLE is deftly assembled. He skims through the notebook: images of hand-drawn symbols flutter past.

Jake's needle BUZZES. The tattoo takes shape under its point: an ancient Thai symbol, lines etched with skill and precision.

Jake wipes blood and ink from the child's skin. He glances up to see that the boy is sobbing quietly. His father holds the boy's wrists tightly, his knuckles white. He whispers desperate assurances to the boy in Malay.

Behind the boy's sobs, a ROAR builds -

10 INT. SAWYER BASEMENT - NIGHT - FLASHBACK 10

Shivering with fear, Young Jake huddles against a cracked, grimy mirror in a dark basement corner. Beside him an iron boiler roars and rattles ... TIC-TIC-TIC-TIC ...

A DARK FIGURE looms, its reflection fragmented in the mirror. A BLADE flashes, slices SKIN, BLOOD wells -

Young Jake SCREAMS -

11 INT. MANSION HALLWAY - NIGHT 11

The scream seems to reverberate around the tight hallway as Jake steps out of the bedroom, bag in hand. He looks back -

Beyond, Mr Lim kneels at his son's bedside in prayer. Jake turns away and strides up the hall, his expression grim.

CUSTOMER (V.O.)

Hey ...

12 EXT. SINGAPORE TATTOO EXPO/JAKE'S BOOTH - DAY 12

The sprawling bustle of a convention, a multi-cultural microcosm of booths, stages, showcases and tents.

(CONTINUED)

A banner reads TATTOO EXPO 2007 in both English and Chinese. Music booms.

Jake hesitates, needle hovering over a partially completed tattoo around a skinny forearm. The design is striking, tribal motifs in black ink.

CUSTOMER

Hey!

JAKE

Huh?

His wiry Singaporean CUSTOMER looks up at him, nervous.

CUSTOMER

I said, is this for real?

Jake slips effortlessly back into salesman mode:

JAKE

You ever hear of a Dayak tribesman
with carpal tunnel syndrome?

Jake continues tattooing.

Behind them, a sign above Jake's stall reads MYSTICAL TATTOOS FOR PROTECTION AND WELL-BEING. Posters show ethnic designs and their promised effect: GOUT, RHEUMATISM, HEMORRHOIDS and more.

Ethnic tattooing tools decorate the walls, an attempt to lend the display some credibility.

CUSTOMER

Big night last night, huh?

JAKE

Nothing I can't handle.

CUT TO:

Jake stuffs his tools into his bag. He shoulders it, looks up to see a figure watching him: MR LIM. If he looked sleep-deprived the night before, he now looks positively zombified.

MR LIM

Your tattoo did not work.

JAKE

(quietly)

It was just a tattoo.

(CONTINUED)

12 CONTINUED: (2)

12

MR LIM
Then the fault is yours.

Evasive, Jake looks around to see who might be listening.

JAKE
(quietly)
Listen, you believe in I Ching,
Feng Shui or faery folk, that's
your business ... but next time
your kid gets sick, you really want
him to get better, take him to a
doctor!

Jake pushes past Lim and disappears into the crowd. Mr Lim
stares after Jake, trembling with rage.

13 INT. SINGAPORE TATTOO EXPO - DAY

13

Jake glances back over his shoulder as he pushes through the
crowd. Mr Lim is still following him. Jake slips between two
booths -

Ahead is a large tent. TAP-TAP-TAP! The sound emanates from
darkness. TAP-TAP-TAP! Jake ducks inside.

14 INT. SAMOAN TENT - DAY

14

Jake stands in the shadows of the tent entrance, watching the
crowd pass by. No sign of Mr Lim. Behind him, the TAP-TAP-TAP
continues.

A young woman, SINA, watches Jake from the shadows of the
tent. She's in her early 20s, beautiful, a red hibiscus
flower behind her ear.

Her eyes travel to the scar on his arm.

SINA
Can I help you?

Jake turns to see her. In awe and off-guard, he struggles to
find his voice:

JAKE
I don't know. Maybe.

ALIPATI (O.S.)
Sina!

(CONTINUED)

Sina disappears into the darkness of the tent, towards the source of the sound. Jake watches after her ... then follows. The main area of the tent is bathed in the soft glow of candlelight. Soft Pacific dub plays from an old boom-box.

Jake steps forward, captivated ...

SEMO (early 20s) lies half-naked amid the other men. An incredible tattoo in progress spreads across his buttocks and down his legs: THE PE'A, a traditional Samoan *tatau*. The tattooist leans over him. ALIPATI's lean body is coiled like a spring, shining with sweat.

Sina sits down beside Semo and begins to massage his temples. She whispers in his ear, soothing.

Dark ink is poured, thick like blood. A bone tool is dipped. Skin is stretched taut. One of the onlookers, PENI, holds Semo's skin taut for Alipati -

TAP-TAP-TAP! Another tool falls and black ink spatters, then is wiped away to reveal the vivid lines of *tatau* beneath. A general sense of calm, of serene concentration.

Jake's eyes pick up other details: a single tear runs down Semo's cheek. The ragged hitch of his breathing. Alipati leans to whisper in Semo's ear:

ALIPATI (CONT'D)

Time out, brutha.

Semo moves to sit up, leans on Alipati for support.

Their heads touch and they share each other's breath, before Semo nods and manages to sit up. Jake watches this exchange of trust, astonished - he's never seen a tattooing experience shared so powerfully.

Sina watches as Jake takes this all in, enjoying the impression the display is making.

JAKE

(impressed)

Jesus.

Alipati looks up, notices Jake.

ALIPATI

You looking for him, you got the wrong tent.

(CONTINUED)

Alipati gets to his feet. His full *pe'a* wraps around his thighs and torso, dazzling in its intricacy, the spaces between the ink luminous in the golden light.

ALIPATI (CONT'D)

Flash tats, bro – got something to prove?

Jake nods towards Alipati's *tatau*.

JAKE

What about you?

ALIPATI

You get the *pe'a*, you don't gotta prove nothing to anyone, ever again.

JAKE

This is from the South Pacific, right?

ALIPATI

Samoan *tatau*, outta Auckland.

JAKE

New Zealand?

Jake looks around. A DISPLAY of ancient tattooing TOOLS, bone and wood bound with flax, is carefully arranged on a tapa cloth draped over a desk to one side. They look as though they haven't been used for many years.

Jake picks up a bone tool from the display at peers at it. The points are needle-sharp.

JAKE (CONT'D)

Do they have any medicinal value?
You know, protection, healing, that kind of thing?

ALIPATI

(scoffs)

You mean like 'Tattoos for Protection and Wellbeing'?

Jake grins, good-natured but nevertheless defensive.

JAKE

Hey, a man's got to make a living.

Alipati approaches Jake, his gaze intense.

(CONTINUED)

ALIPATI

This ain't just a living. You get the *pe'a* to honour the spirits of your *tupuaga*, who wore it before you. You get it to honour your father. And your father's father.

JAKE

What if your father isn't worth honouring?

Alipati narrows his eyes, nods, as if Jake has just given away some crucial detail. Sina watches, interested.

Jake takes a step back as Alipati leans in close, his voice soft, emphatic:

ALIPATI

The pain of the *tatau*, it changes you. You breathe into it, accept it, learn from it. Only then can you find a way through.

Alipati's hand snaps out and grabs Jake's wrist, turns it over to reveal the livid scar on Jake's inner arm. Alipati nods, as though the scar confirms his suspicions about Jake:

ALIPATI (CONT'D)

You know what I'm talking about. You seen pain. Only, you ain't found a way through yours, eh?

These words strike Jake, seem to sink in ... then defensiveness kicks in. He tries to pull away.

JAKE

I'm just looking for some styles to do.

ALIPATI

That ain't all you're looking for.
(beat)
Sometimes it's right in front of your eyes, brutha. You just gotta open them.

Jake yanks his arm from Alipati's grip, eyes blazing with anger. Alipati smirks and turns away, as if unsurprised by Jake's reaction.

Jake turns to leave, fuming.

(CONTINUED)

14 CONTINUED: (4)

14

ALIPATI (CONT'D)
 (his back to Jake)
 It was a rose. With a barb wire
 stem.

Jake freezes for a moment, eyes wide ... then steps out of
 the tent.

15 INT. SINGAPORE TATTOO EXPO - DAY

15

Outside the tent, Jake looks down - he still holds the bone
 and wood tool he was looking at before.

With a last glance back towards the tent, he stuffs it into
 his pocket and strides away.

16 INT. SINGAPORE BAR - EVENING

16

Jake is back in his spot at the bar, a shot of Sambuca in
 front of him. Behind him, the post-convention crowd is a blur
 of leather, ink and pierced flesh under black-light and neon.

Jake seems disconnected from the world, his expression
 distant as he toys absently with the tool he stole. Despite
 the crowd, he is alone.

A heavily-tattooed middle-aged man leans over.

TATTOOED PUNTER
 Lemme guess - tattoo me with that
 and my dick'll grow four inches
 overnight?

JAKE
 You never know.

Jake turns away ... to see Mr Lim pushing through the bar
 towards him. He looks for an exit, but he's cornered.

JAKE (CONT'D)
 Look, what do you want - a refund?

MR LIM
 If you don't believe, your actions
 have no power. They can cause ...
 only pain.

JAKE
 Don't talk to me about pain.

(CONTINUED)

MR LIM

My son died this morning.

This hits Jake like a hammer. He looks away, trying to make sense of this.

JAKE

He's ... dead?

MR LIM

Now do you understand what you've done?

JAKE

(weakly)

God, I'm sorry ...

MR LIM

You will be.

Jake looks down -

The blade of a knife flicks open, catches the light -

Jake stumbles back against the bar, crashing into other patrons.

Jake scrabbles for purchase ... he falls, bringing the Polynesian lamp from the bar crashing down with him ... POP! The bulb shatters and the lamp goes dark.

His point made, Mr Lim stands over Jake and looks down on him. On the floor, Jake looks wretched, at the end of the line.

JAKE

Go on, then ... do it.

Lim's anger seems to fade, leaving only pity for Jake.

MR LIM

Perhaps a man who believes in nothing is already dead.

Mr Lim pushes away through the crowd.

Jake looks up, dazed, to see patrons staring down at him. Among them is the Tattooed Punter - he shakes his head in disgust and turns away.

Jake frowns, noticing -

(CONTINUED)

16 CONTINUED: (2)

16

BLOOD drips from his clenched fist. He opens it to reveal the Samoan tool. Its needle points have bitten deep into his palm.

The noise of the bar is pushed into the distance. TAP-TAP-TAP ... TAP-TAP-TAP! The sound of the Samoan tattooist at work. Polynesian voices united in song, strangely menacing.

We PUSH IN on the lamp lying on its side next to Jake, towards its now dark scene of Pacific kitsch. The sounds of tatau in progress intensify ...

17 INT. DREAM - VARIOUS

17

TAP-TAP-TAP! Samoan tattooing tools work dark skin, leaving their dense pattern of ink and blood. A distinctive tapa cloth design. Beyond, flax matting disappears into shadow. TAP-TAP-TAP!

JAKE'S NEEDLE etches the last of the Chinese symbol onto Mr Lim's son. The young boy's eyes are open, bloodshot, glazed and dilated. Dead.

YOUNG JAKE huddles in the shadows. The boiler's ticking is indistinguishable from the sound of the tattooing tools. The dark figure looms.

DARK FIGURE

You've brought shame on our house.

A KNIFE BLADE glows red-hot against the boiler.

ALIPATI (O.S.)

(distant, distorted)

You seen pain. Only, you ain't found a way through yours ...

The movement of the tattooing tools becomes frenzied. A fist clenches in pain ... blood flows ... TAP-TAP-TAP! The lines of pe'a are black, vivid - graphic patterns wrap around the curve of a body in extreme close up -

ALIPATI (O.S.) (CONT'D)

(distant, distorted)

Sometimes it's right in front of your eyes, brutha. You just gotta -

18 INT. HOTEL ROOM - NIGHT

18

Jake opens his eyes.

(CONTINUED)

18 CONTINUED:

18

The TAPPING of the tools swirls around him as he sits bolt upright on his bed in a shitty, neon-lit hotel room. His chest heaving, Jake looks across to the bedside table, and the tool he stole from the Samoans.

19 INT. SINGAPORE TATTOO EXPO - NIGHT

19

Booths are being dismantled and packed away. Jake appears at a run. He reaches the spot where the Samoan tent was and stops, out of breath.

The tent is gone. Jake looks down, to the Samoan tool held in his hand.

Fading in, the roar of JET ENGINES ...

20 EXT. AUCKLAND AIRPORT - DAY

20

A plane thunders towards the tarmac, landing gear impacting with a squeal.

A fully tattooed Maori warrior looks down from a massive sign that reads: *Haere mai ki te whenua o Aotearoa* - Welcome to New Zealand.

Jake looks up at the sign, impressed. Behind him, the bustle of travellers arriving and departing. Jake heads for a line of waiting taxis.

21 EXT. TAXI STAND - DAY

21

A TAXI DRIVER holds the boot of the car open for Jake to load his bags. A swirling Moko design encircles one of his forearms.

Jake pulls a LANGUAGES OF THE SOUTH PACIFIC phrasebook from the pocket of his bag and looks up a word:

JAKE

Talofa.

TAXI DRIVER

(shakes his head)

Kia ora.

Jake looks blankly at him.

TAXI DRIVER (CONT'D)

(grins)

I'm Maori. Not Samoan.

(CONTINUED)

21 CONTINUED: 21

Jake nods, confused. The driver SLAMS the boot closed –

22 INT/EXT. TAXI/CENTRAL AUCKLAND STREET - DAY 22

A car horn BLARES. SUVs and sedans fight for space, alongside a multicultural pedestrian tide.

Jake watches from inside a taxi. A glimpse of Ta Moko here, a Samoan tattoo design there – every variation on contemporary tattooing, worn openly with pride.

23 INT. JAKE'S APARTMENT - VARIOUS - DAY 23

SLAM! The door closes behind Jake. He stands in an empty motel-style apartment. A short hallway leads towards the bedroom. Jake puts down his bags.

Jake slides open the drawer of the bedside table, grabs the BIBLE that lies inside. He throws it in the trash.

Jake shaves. Smart-casual clothes hit the bed. Jake buttons his shirt.

Jake picks up the Samoan tool from the kitchen benchtop. He looks down at it, considering ... then puts the tool in a drawer and heads for the door.

24 EXT. BEDLAM TATTOO STUDIO - DAY 24

Elaborate signage announces BEDLAM in stylised, manga-style script. Below, the entrance to what could only be one fucking cool tattoo studio. Jake looks up at the sign.

25 INT. BEDLAM TATTOO STUDIO - DAY 25

Extensive mirrors create an illusion of depth. TATTOO ARTISTS laugh, joke, dance to Japanese punk. The blacks and greys of the decor extend to the tattoos, which seem accomplished but soulless, generic McTattoos for trendsetters.

Jake looks around, impressed.

CRASH (O.S.)
Son of a bitch.

Jake turns to see CRASH (mid-30s), American, heavily-tattooed and dressed in designer cool.

(CONTINUED)

CRASH (CONT'D)
You got some serious balls.

Jake meets Crash's glare. The murmur of conversation quells.

JAKE
Come on, Crash ... forgive and
forget, huh?

One of Crash's tattooists, CANINE, approaches, concerned.

CANINE
Crash ...?

CRASH
(to Canine)
My first studio. Apple of my eye.
This little fucker steals a design
off my wall.

Embarrassed silence. Jake returns Crash's gaze, clearly
guilty of this offence.

CRASH (CONT'D)
Tattoos some South Central hip-hop
who-the-fuck-is-this-guy, next
thing I know they're jerking each
other off over my fucking design in
a sidebar on page seventeen of
Tattooist Magazine.

Guilty again.

CRASH (CONT'D)
Then he trashes my Porsche ...

Jake frowns - eh?

CRASH (CONT'D)
... fucks my dog, steals my AmEx
and spends up big at Saks Fifth
Avenue.
(starts to grin)
Lingerie department.
(beat)
My mother's size.

Jake's grinning now too. Crash opens his arms.

CRASH (CONT'D)
C'mere.

Jake hugs Crash. The onlookers laugh and return to work.

A TATTOOIST MAGAZINE image of a younger Jake mugging alongside a tattooed black man in a baseball cap and bling.

Jake and Crash sit on comfortable-looking couches in Crash's impeccably-designed designer office, the magazine open on the coffee table in front of them. Crash is on a roll.

CRASH

The Pacific, it's the heartland of tattooing – the wellspring, the source. The word 'tattoo' ... they invented it, the Samoans, the Fijians, those guys. It's the wellspring – I say that already? And that's good for my brand value ... hell, I just traded in the Boxster for a Bentley. But it don't make it any of your business.

JAKE

Why not?

CRASH

Cause it's not in your blood. This guy Alipati – he's hard-core, you know that, right? He ain't just gonna hand generations of tradition down to some kid from Buttfuck, Minnesota who thinks he's had some kind of epiphany.

Jake looks away, frustrated.

CRASH (CONT'D)

Anyway, the old Jake wouldn't have asked – he'd have just stolen the designs and made out like he'd been doing Samoan tattoos his whole life.

JAKE

(grins)

Was the old Jake that much of an asshole?

CRASH

I kind of liked him. Egocentric. Pissed off. Self-destructive ...

(CONTINUED)

JAKE

Should've been around when he went downhill.

CRASH

You know, the only thing that sets one tattoo apart from another is the guy doing the work. Skill - that's what matters.

(beat)

Come work for me again.

JAKE

That's not what I came here for, Crash.

CRASH

Give me two days a week. I'll throw in the company car.

JAKE

Crash -

CRASH

The Samoans ain't gonna teach you shit, bet you anything you want.

JAKE

Can you get me his address or not?

Jake gets into the back of another taxi. A SAMOAN DRIVER is behind the wheel.

JAKE

Kia ora.

SAMOAN DRIVER

Can't you tell a hori from a coconut, boss?

JAKE

Huh?

SAMOAN DRIVER

I'm Samoan. We say *talofa*. Where you going?

JAKE

Otara.

27 CONTINUED:

27

The driver grins as he slams the taxi into gear and pulls out into traffic.

SAMOAN DRIVER
Home sweet home.

28 INT/EXT. TAXI/OTARA STREETS - DAY

28

Jake stares out at the passing landscape.

Outside the window, the heart of Auckland's Pacific Island community offers sharp contrast to the roar of downtown Auckland.

We pass people on the street, booming hip-hop, roaring cars. Pylons tower overhead. From the corrugated iron roofs to the flowers and Pacific-style clothes, everywhere we look, the landscape seems to burst with the colour of life.

29 INT/EXT. TAXI/OTARA MARKETS - AFTERNOON

29

The taxi pulls up at the edge of a car-park behind Otara shopping centre. The wide expanse of concrete is crowded with colourful stalls and vendors, bustling with people.

The TAXI DRIVER nods towards the market.

TAXI DRIVER
In there.

Jake follows his gaze, nervous.

30 EXT. OTARA MARKETS - AFTERNOON

30

Jake heads through the dense throng of the market. He looks around, lost, then glimpses -

A red flower. A few metres away, Sina talks to an OLD SAMOAN WOMAN at a fruit stall, the red flower in her hair. Jake watches, mesmerised, as she laughs and hugs the woman, then walks away.

Jake follows. Passersby jostle him as he pushes against the flow of the crowd. Jake darts between stalls into another, identical row. He spins, trying to get his bearings. The bustling maze of the market closes in on him, trinkets clothes and fruit stalls ...

SINA (O.S.)
Lost?

(CONTINUED)

Jake turns to see Sina watching him.

JAKE

I was.

SINA

(she points)

I think Singapore's back that way.

JAKE

Actually, I was looking for you.

SINA

For me?

JAKE

Your friends, I mean ... you and your friends.

SINA

Maybe we should go before you buy something you regret.

She leads him through the market, a familiar sound floats above the others: TAP-TAP-TAP ... TAP-TAP-TAP!

31 INT/EXT. ALIPATI'S GARAGE - DAY

31

A back corner of the market, where canvas stalls give way to the backs of shops and storage areas.

In one of them, Alipati works, his back to Jake. Semo, who we saw being worked on in Singapore sits at the head of another a young man being tattooed, OPETA, muttering encouragement.

Peni and the other guys from the expo hang out on folding chairs and mats.

PENI

Your girlfriend's here, cuz.

Alipati notices Jake and Sina and sighs.

ALIPATI

Every expo, there's some *palagi* wants to be down with the brown.

He gets to his feet as Jake steps nervously to the entrance of the stall, a tattooing tool in his hand. He glares at Sina. She shrugs.

(CONTINUED)

JAKE

That stuff I said, I —

ALIPATI

You came all the way to Otara to apologise? Those suckers must pay you heaps.

Laughter. Jake looks around nervously.

JAKE

You said what I was looking for was right in front of me ... I didn't understand. But I do now, and all that other bullshit, it's finished. I want something real ... I want you to teach me.

ALIPATI

That what you thought I meant?

JAKE

Ever since Singapore, I've been thinking about it ... dreaming about it ...

ALIPATI

I told you, *tatau* is about more than a living. It don't start here —
(holds up the tool, then
taps his chest)
It starts here.

JAKE

I know. I'm ready.

ALIPATI

It ain't skills you need, brother.

Alipati turns away.

JAKE

But I've come a long way!

ALIPATI

Not from what I can see.

Jake watches Alipati, helpless. He sighs and turns away.

Sina watches as Jake disappears into the market crowd.

(CONTINUED)

ALIPATI (CONT'D)

(to Sina)
You should know better, bringing
him here.

SINA

I don't know ... there's something
about him, Ali. He's not like the
others.

Alipati looks at her sharply.

ALIPATI

You want to go down that road,
Sina? Your uncle ain't gonna like
it, that's for sure ...

Sina nods - he's got that right.

ALIPATI (CONT'D)

... and neither do I.

Sina meets his gaze ... then runs to catch up with Jake.
Alipati watches after her, concerned.

SINA

Wait up!

32 EXT. OTARA STREETS - LATE AFTERNOON

32

Jake and Sina walk side by side through suburban streets.

SINA

Alipati's old-school, traditional.
They say he can see a *tatau* before
he does it. That the spirits tell
him what's supposed to be there.

Jake looks down at his scar.

JAKE

Or what was.

SINA

Tatau's his life - he thinks it's
up to him to protect it.

JAKE

From what?

SINA

From guys like you.

33

EXT. MR VA'A'S HOUSE - EVENING

33

A weatherboard state house among other weatherboard state houses. A large hibiscus bush dominates the front of the house. Jake follows Sina up the path towards the door. He looks across -

Inside the house next-door, an elderly Samoan woman covers a mirror with tapa cloth.

JAKE
What's she doing?

SINA
She's covering the mirror for the night so bad spirits don't get her.

JAKE
Are you serious?

SINA
I lived with my Grandma for a while in Apia. There was all sorts of things we weren't allowed to do. Whistling inside, brushing your hair or laughing at night.

JAKE
And you believe all that stuff?

SINA
Maybe. I mean, I go to church. But Alipati's taught me a lot about the old ways.

JAKE
Best of both worlds, huh?

SINA
For now.

They arrive at the porch.

SINA (CONT'D)
Why did you come here, Jake? To learn *tatau* from Alipati?

JAKE
I've done things I'm not proud of. And meeting you guys ... it felt like -

(CONTINUED)

SINA
What, fate?

JAKE
That's not what I —

She takes his hand, runs her fingertips across his scar.

SINA
A guy with a scar like this has to
believe in something, right?

Their eyes meet. Then Jake pulls his arm away.

JAKE
Talk to Alipati for me?

SINA
Jake ...

JAKE
I don't want to take it away from
him. It's his art, and I respect
that. All I want to do is watch,
and learn.

SINA
(at last)
Okay.

Jake grins.

SINA (CONT'D)
Now if my uncle comes home from
church and finds a *palagi* boy on
the doorstep, he'll kick me all the
way back to Sa. Literally.

Sina disappears inside.

Jake looks along the side of the house. The back garden looks
immaculate, lush, wild with banana palms and flowers. A
corrugated iron shed is visible, brooding in the darkness.

Sina reappears.

SINA (CONT'D)
Give me a couple of days, I'll talk
to him. But come see me at work,
okay? Not round here.

33 CONTINUED: (2)

33

She hands Jake a piece of paper, then takes the red flower from her hair and hands it to him, before closing the door. Jake grins, then starts down the path.

TAP-TAP-TAP. Jake pauses, listening. TAP-TAP-TAP.

34 EXT. GARDEN - NIGHT

34

TAP-TAP-TAP. Jake approaches the shed and cups his hand against a dark window. The sound emanates from the darkness inside.

The sound of a car pulling up. Headlights sweep across the lawn. Jake looks around - where to run?

A car door SLAMS. CRUNCH ... CRUNCH ... CRUNCH ... the heavy tread of a man coming up the path towards the house.

Jake backs slowly around the side of the shed. A MACHETE leans against the shed wall. Jake kicks it over. The blade clatters against the corrugated iron. Jake freezes.

A dark shape on the path - a huge man, his head cocked, massive hands hanging by his sides. He strides towards the shed and pushes the door open.

MR VA'A stands in the shed doorway and peers into the darkness. He wears a *faitaga* and churchgoing jacket, with a silver crucifix around his neck. Mere inches away, Jake cowers against the shed wall.

Mr Va'a closes the door behind him and heads into the house. The door SLAMS behind him. Jake sighs with relief.

PAT-PAT. PAT. Jake looks down ... droplets of fresh blood hit the grass. The wound on his palm is bleeding.

TAP-TAP-TAP! The tattooing sound again, from inside. Jake peers through the window ...

35 INT. SHED - NIGHT - DREAM

35

The darkness through the shed window becomes a tunnel, dim candlelight in the distance.

A man lies face-down on flax mats, moaning softly. A silhouette crouches over him, bony hands working tattooing tools: TAP-TAP-TAP!

(CONTINUED)

A partially-completed *pe'a* design on the man's back ... the long, sharp points of an *ulalei*, a ceremonial necklace of whale-tooth ...

Something's wrong. The man gasps, his breath a deathly rattle. The song begins to waver and crackle, as though playing off an old record. The tattoo cracks and festers as fresh lines split and weep. The *ulalei* is streaked with blood and ink.

The recipient turns his head – it's Jake! The hammering intensifies and he tries to ward off the blows. Mighty CLANGS continue as tattooed skin ruptures ... blood and ink run together ... Jake gasps for breath.

Blood blooms ... a red hibiscus ... the blood clouds outwards ... a horribly bloodshot eye, its pupil fixed and dilated.

Jake tries to pull away from the blows. The images merge and shift ... the tattooist, the rose tattoo, Mr Lim's son's dead eyes, the nightmare *pe'a* in progress, the ink, the *ulalei*, the blood, the hibiscus flower –

Jake SCREAMS –

36 INT. APARTMENT BEDROOM - NIGHT 36

Jake sits up in bed, breathing hard. Lights from the street dance through the shadows. He opens his hand ... to find Sina's red hibiscus flower, crushed against dried blood on his palm.

37 INT. APARTMENT BATHROOM - NIGHT 37

A small bathroom with a large mirror. Behind Jake, a shower alcove with a frosted glass door. He bandages his hand, then fills a glass with water.

38 INT. APARTMENT BEDROOM - DAWN 38

The first pale rays of dawn creep into the bedroom.

A MURMURING UNDERCURRENT of the dream's cacophony. Jake sits on the bed, deep in thought, his gaze fixed on –

The red hibiscus, its stem resting in the glass of water, on the bedside table. As the dawn creeps towards it, its petals begin to revive.

39

INT. BEDLAM TATTOO STUDIO - DAY

39

The sound of buzzing needles fills the air. Crash heads towards an empty workspace, the Tattooist Magazine in hand.

Crash tears out the page with Jake on it and tapes it to the mirror, then turns to Jake with a smile of triumph.

JAKE

Crash, take that down ...

CRASH

There's the book.

JAKE

No original designs?

CRASH

Get to work.

He points. Jake looks across to see LUKE, a Singaporean teenager (18), cool but nerdishly so.

Nearby, a young Singaporean woman checks out the images of Bedlam's work. This is VICTORIA (early 20s). She's attractive and wearing what looks like a conservatively pretty dress.

Jake approaches Luke.

JAKE

Hey, I'm Jake.

Victoria turns, holds out her hand.

VICTORIA

Victoria.

Jake is taken aback to see graphic tattoos snaking out from under her dress.

VICTORIA (CONT'D)

Crash says you could be the next big thing.

JAKE

Which one of you guys ...

VICTORIA

(points to Luke)

Oh, Luke, my cousin. Sorry ... Do you mind if I watch? Check out your stuff?

(CONTINUED)

JAKE
(uncomfortable)
Okay.

Luke holds out the Bedlam design book, open to a page. Jake glances at it, then takes the book and closes it.

VICTORIA
Aren't you gonna use the book?

Jake pulls on his latex gloves.

JAKE
(quietly)
You want something cool or not?

Luke grins.

JAKE (CONT'D)
This is gonna hurt. You man enough?

LUKE
I'm eighteen ... on Saturday.

JAKE
Then I guess you got nothing to worry about.

Jake smiles at Victoria. She smiles back, clearly infatuated.

Jake's needle begins to BUZZ ... an outline emerges, geometric shapes ... then deep blocks of colour, richly shaded.

Victoria watches Jake intently. His eyes flick to her, conscious of her attention, acknowledging it. Busted, Victoria looks away.

Finally, Jake snaps off his rubber gloves. He steps back to admire the finished design. It's discreet but stunning, a nod to the Bedlam aesthetic but something more, with colour that gives the image a bold luminosity.

Luke turns his shoulder towards the mirror and smiles.

VICTORIA
Where have you been hiding?

JAKE
Singapore.

LUKE
No shit - that's where we're from.

Jake smiles – no shit.

LUKE (CONT'D)
What were you doing there?

JAKE
Avoiding questions. Use moisturiser
every day, keep it out of the sun
and try not to get it wet, okay?

Luke takes out his wallet. Jake shakes his head.

JAKE (CONT'D)
On the house – birthday present.

LUKE
You serious?

JAKE
Get outta here before Crash changes
my mind.

Luke gets off the chair, reaches into his jacket and hands
Jake a folded piece of paper.

LUKE
I'm having a party on Friday night,
my folks' place. It won't be lame,
they got a pool and stuff.

Jake takes the invite. Victoria smiles at him, intent.

VICTORIA
He'll be there.

A couple of the Bedlam employees smirk, watching the scene.
Self-conscious, Jake hands the invite back.

JAKE
I got plans Friday.

Victoria shrugs – suit yourself – and leaves with Luke,
turning before they reach the door to look back at Jake one
last time. Crash appears.

CRASH
What is this, a charity or a dating
agency?

JAKE

You gonna take the picture down or not?

CUT TO:

A BAND OF TATTOO ART is etched around a large forearm, subtly echoing the geometric forms of *tatau*.

Jake frowns, looks down. A miniature poodle sits at his feet.

The customer is GRAHAM, a burly league player turned businessman. He wears expensive suit trousers and Italian leather shoes, at odds with his cauliflower ears.

Jake leans in to resume the tattoo, then stops again. Graham's trophy girlfriend CHANEL admires him from the counter, her eyes travelling admiringly across his tattoos. She chews gum.

GRAHAM

I'm getting this for her. Eh, pumpkin? Got a thing about tattooed fellas.

CHANEL

Graham!

Chanel leans down to retrieve the poodle, a manoeuvre clearly designed to reveal maximum cleavage. Jake stands back to give her room.

Jake starts work once again. We look away, to the bustling studio, as the needle BUZZES.

DISSOLVE TO:

Different customers, different tattoos. Jake's customer is IVAN, fifties, powerful and wiry – perhaps a former soldier or merchant seaman – with a ZZ-Top beard gone haywire. In the groove now, Jake pulls on his gloves.

IVAN

Petrovich.

JAKE

Excuse me?

IVAN

Petrovich. Ivan. Three o'clock.

(CONTINUED)

JAKE

Right. Sawyer, Jake. I'll be your
tattoo artist this afternoon.

Jake eyes Ivan's weathered skin, an encyclopedia of classic
tattoo designs.

JAKE (CONT'D)

If I can some find room on here ..?

IVAN

There's always room.

Jake's needle BUZZES, shapes and defines. Ivan stares into
space, his jaw clenched.

DISSOLVE TO:

LATER. Business is winding down as Jake clears away his
workspace. Crash approaches.

CRASH

All this colour, this
expressiveness ...

JAKE

You like it?

CRASH

Get in touch with your inner mural
artist on your own time.

Crash walks away.

JAKE

Hey Crash, about that car -

A jingle of airborne keys. Jake catches them.

CRASH

Don't bleed on my fucking merino
seat covers.

Alarmed, Jake notices that a trickle runs from the bandage on
his hand, black and thick like ink.

An immaculate bathroom out the back of the studio. At the
basin, Jake pulls away the bandage. Black ink mixes with the
water and swirls away down the drain.

(CONTINUED)

40 CONTINUED:

40

Sudden movement in the mirror – a dark figure, barely glimpsed in the reflection. Jake spins, but the room is empty. He turns back to the basin, creeps out.

41 EXT. BACK ALLEY - DAY

41

A grimy back-alley behind Bedlam Tattoo Studio. Jake stares, car keys in hand.

JAKE

Oh, man ...

THE COMPANY CAR is just that: a late-model Japanese import, covered with Bedlam-style tattoo designs – a mobile billboard for Bedlam, and seriously uncool.

42 INT/EXT. JAKE'S CAR/OTARA STREETS - DAY

42

Jake drives through Otara. He holds the square of paper that Sina gave him. He turns a corner and crawls the kerb, reading the numbers.

JAKE

Nineteen ... twenty-one ...

Jake slows the car.

JAKE (CONT'D)

Twenty-three ... Jesus.

Jake looks aghast. It's a church.

43 INT. CHURCH/ARCHIVE - DAY

43

Storage shelves loom, stacked with boxes and piles of paper. Barely organised chaos.

OSONE (10) wears cool street clothes, at odds with the depth behind his eyes. He fishes a faded photo from a box full of old pictures. He studies the faces. He seems both intent on the image and distant, as though focussing beyond it.

OSONE

Mr Palauni.

He passes the photo to Sina, who looks at it.

SINA

How did you know that?

(CONTINUED)

OSONE

Seen him round, eh.

SINA

He died before you were born!

Sina wears a conservative blouse and skirt as she stacks bulging archival boxes. As she lifts one, the bottom drops out of it and photos spill across the floor.

Jake watches from the doorway, amused.

JAKE

Bugger.

SINA

Glad to see you're making an effort to learn the language.

Jake kneels and helps Sina put the photos back in the box. Osone stares, eyes wide, over Jake's shoulder – as if looking at someone behind him.

Jake follows his gaze – no-one there. He looks back.

JAKE

Hey.

Osone edges out of the room, as if he's trying to stay as far away from Jake as he can while he does it. Jake shrugs and flips through the pictures: family group shots, people in churchgoing attire and ceremonial dress.

JAKE (CONT'D)

So this is what you do when you're not giving scalp massages.

SINA

There's forty years of South Auckland stories in this room. My uncle's trying to make sure they don't get lost.

JAKE

Looks like you're the one doing all the work.

SINA

It's the least I can do to repay him for everything he's done for me.

(checks her watch)

(MORE)

(CONTINUED)

43 CONTINUED: (2)

43

SINA (CONT'D)

I have to go pick up some more photos. You want to come?

JAKE

Sure.

44 INT. CHURCH HALLWAY — DAY

44

Sina leads Jake down a hallway towards the church foyer. Jake looks uncomfortable.

SINA

You okay?

JAKE

If I'd known I was going to church, I'd have worn something less comfortable.

Jake pauses, looking through the main doors to the church. Glass panels offer a view of the pews and the altar beyond. Mr Va'a stands in the aisle, talking with an elderly MINISTER.

JAKE (CONT'D)

Your uncle, huh?

SINA

You've met him?

JAKE

Not really.

A middle-aged PARISHIONER approaches Mr Va'a and the Minister. Mr Va'a takes her hands warmly and smiles. She beams at him.

SINA

He's not really my uncle — after my mum died, Mr Va'a's wife took me in. Now he's alone, too. But he lets me stay.

Va'a turns, looks through the glass. He sees Sina and smiles ... then notices Jake. His smile fades. Jake looks nervous.

SINA (CONT'D)

What about your folks? Where are they?

JAKE

They're dead.

(CONTINUED)

44 CONTINUED:

44

Sina looks at him differently now, like she understands something about him.

45 EXT. PERENESE HOUSE - DAY

45

Ragged graffiti has been sprayed across an unpainted wooden fence, several of its boards smashed in. A car sits rusting and abandoned in a concrete driveway, weeds growing through the cracks. Nearby, a letterbox lies on its side.

Beyond is a weathered state house, its curtains drawn, its welcome cold. It's as though someone sucked all the colour out of this corner of Otago. An unseen dog WHINES mournfully, an eerie soundtrack to this grim landscape.

Jake follows Sina from his car up towards the front door. Sina knocks. The door opens a crack to reveal suspicious eyes.

SINA

Malo Mr Perenese, it's Sina.

It opens. MR PERENESE, silver-haired, middle-aged, wearing a faded T-shirt over old suit pants, glares at Jake - then softens as he turns to Sina.

PERENESE

Talofa, Sina. Come in.

46 INT. PERENESE HALLWAY - DAY

46

The carpet is threadbare, the wallpaper stained yellow by nicotine. The house feels heavy with neglect. Nooks and crannies disappear into shadow.

SINA

This is my friend Jake.

JAKE

How you doing?

Jake smiles and extends a hand. Mr Perenese takes it for a second, barely making eye contact.

PERENESE

(to Sina)

You're here for the pictures? I put them in a box for you.

Mr Perenese leads Sina away down the hall towards the front of the house. Jake stands in the hallway, awkward.

(CONTINUED)

46 CONTINUED:

46

He picks up an old framed photo, blows off the dust: it looks a hundred years old, a Samoan man crouching in ceremonial dress, a traditional whale-tooth *ulalei* around his neck.

A cockroach scuttles across the carpet, into the kitchen.

47 INT. PERENESE KITCHEN - DAY

47

Jake steps into the kitchen as the roach scuttles away. A chipped formica table and windows cracked and stained. A simple wooden crucifix hangs on the wall.

48 INT. PERENESE HALLWAY/BEDROOM - DAY

48

Unnerved, Jake steps back out into the hallway. From the living room, the sound of muffled voices. Jake catches sight of something in a room off the hallway: a portrait photo of a young woman on a shelf above a neatly-made bed.

Jake pushes the door open further ...

A second portrait, also of a young woman, is revealed. Then another ... and another. Jake pushes the door open further.

A middle-aged Samoan woman, MRS PERENESE, sits in a chair in front of a dresser, her lined face reflected in a large, round mirror. She pulls a brush slowly through her long, greying hair. Her eyes swivel to look at Jake in the mirror.

JAKE

Excuse me, I didn't mean to ...

She regards him with her unblinking stare, eyes empty with sadness.

49 INT. PERENESE LIVING ROOM - DAY

49

Grey light filters through the drawn curtains. Everything in this room seems to languish in its place.

SINA

They'll be looked after, Mr. Perenese.

PERENESE

Old memories ... no use to me.

Mr Perenese bends to lift a cardboard box. The back of his T-shirt rides up, revealing his *pe'a* beneath. Jake notices it with interest. Perenese follows his gaze.

(CONTINUED)

Mr Perenese's eyes blaze with sudden anger.

PERENESE (CONT'D)
You get a good look, eh boy?

JAKE
I'm a tattoo artist.

PERENESE
So what?
(to Sina, in Samoan)
*Sina, why you bring this palagi to
my house?*

SINA
He didn't mean to offend you.

Perenese glares from Sina to Jake.

PERENESE
Take the pictures and go.

Jake drives, Sina next to him.

JAKE
I thought a *pe'a* was something to
be proud of.

SINA
Not for him. One of their kids ran
away, years ago, and the community
turned their backs on them.

JAKE
And what, he just accepted that?

SINA
He had no choice. It made them look
like bad parents - around here
that's a mark of shame.

They pull up outside the church. Jake looks up at the
crucifix that graces its roof, his expression dark.

JAKE
Maybe they deserved it. A kid
doesn't run away unless there's
something he's running away from.

Sina watches him, sensing his pain.

SINA

What happened to you, Jake?

Jake's expression darkens.

JAKE

So, you talk to Alipati?

SINA

(sighs)

Yeah. Jake, I'm sorry, but he —

JAKE

Tell him he can name his price.

SINA

What?

JAKE

Tell him whatever he wants to teach me, I'll pay it.

SINA

Jake, *tatau* isn't just some cure you can buy and sell.

She gets out of the car and slams the door. She looks back in the window.

SINA (CONT'D)

Don't come back here, okay?

Jake watches Sina walk through the church gates. He slams the car into gear and throws it into a U-turn. The car swings around —

Osona stands right in his path! Jake slams on the brakes.

Jake leaps out of the car and crosses to where Osona stands in the road. The boy stares at him, unruffled.

JAKE

Are you okay? I didn't even —

OSONE

You see him?

Jake looks around.

JAKE

Who?

OSONE

Following you round.

JAKE

There's no one there.

OSONE

Just cause you don't see no one,
don't mean there ain't no one
there.

Osonone points. Baffled, Jake follows the boy's gaze to where black ink runs freely from the cut on his hand.

Hip-hop bass pounds ahead of a sedan as it pulls up beside them. A tinted window rolls down to reveal a large Samoan man in his early twenties. Sitting next to him, his brother. Osonone's COUSINS.

COUSIN

Osonone!

Osonone runs to the car and gets in. The car peels away, bass thumping. Jake watches them go, bewildered.

52 INT. JAKE'S APARTMENT - EVENING

52

Jake enters the apartment and slams the door behind him, his expression stormy. The sound of WATER RUNNING. Jake follows it.

53 INT. JAKE'S APARTMENT/BATHROOM - EVENING

53

Jake steps up to the bathroom door. Inside, someone splashes in the shower. He hesitates a moment, then pushes the door open.

Victoria's head is visible above the shower door, the rest of her body obscured. She YELPS in surprise.

JAKE

Shit!

Jake ducks back outside. He leans against the wall. The water is shut off.

Jake peers around the edge of the door. Victoria is drying herself.

(CONTINUED)

She's covered in striking tattoos, the unmistakable Bedlam aesthetic. Jake's eyes widen. He ducks back out of sight.

JAKE (CONT'D)

You always take a shower after you sneak into someone's place?

Victoria emerges from the bathroom. She's wearing vinyl pants, boots, a tiny top that reveals every tattoo – she looks ready to enter the matrix. Jake stares.

VICTORIA

Only when I'm dirty. There's Stoli in the freezer ... see if we can't loosen you up a bit before we go.

JAKE

Where?

VICTORIA

Luke's party, remember?

She sweeps past him. Jake watches helplessly.

Jake and Victoria sit on the couch, drinking vodka on ice. Her cigarette trails smoke.

VICTORIA

What did you think, the island princess was just going to hand over the Samoan instruction book?

JAKE

I thought they'd be flattered I wanted to learn from them.

VICTORIA

Well, I think you can do better than a garage in Otara, Mr Tattooist Magazine.

JAKE

I guess I was doing okay before I came here. I was travelling the world. Making money ...

Victoria puts her glass down and straddles him, stroking his chest.

VICTORIA
I find naked ambition such an
attractive quality in a tattooist.

Victoria takes off her top. Jake puts his hands on her waist,
moves them up towards her bra. She grabs his wrists.

VICTORIA (CONT'D)
First things first.

CUT TO:

Jake's notebook, open on the bed to a sketch of a tribal
design. A needle BUZZES. A line of tears runs from the corner
of Victoria's eye towards her hair ... a soft MOAN escapes
her.

CUT TO:

Jake frowns, concentrating as he completes ...

A tribal design in greys and blacks, encircling Victoria's
belly-button.

VICTORIA
What does it mean?

JAKE
Ancient Chinese cure for breaking
and entering.

She hits him playfully. He pulls her close.

JAKE (CONT'D)
Who cares what it means?

She kisses him but pulls away, having second thoughts.

VICTORIA
What's wrong?

JAKE
Nothing. Let's get out of here.

A pool-side barbecue for Luke's birthday. Teenage BOYS and
GIRLS laugh, shout and drink. Some splash in the water.

(CONTINUED)

A few posers sit around in shades and designer clothes, too cool for the pool.

Food sizzles on a barbeque that looks like something NASA designed. UNCLE KEN turns the sausages pedantically. Next to him, AUNT SUZY watches the kids with barely-contained suspicion. Both look buttoned down, respectable.

Someone WHISTLES. The crowd parts and Victoria appears, a bottle of tequila in hand, Jake in tow.

VICTORIA
(whispers to Jake)
Just play along, okay?

Jake looks confused. Aunt Suzy and Uncle Ken glare at Victoria. One of the sausages catches fire.

VICTORIA (CONT'D)
Hey, Aunt Suzy.

She kisses her aunt on the cheek, deliberately leaving a smear of lipstick.

UNCLE KEN
Cover yourself up! You want people
to think you're a criminal?

VICTORIA
This is my fiance, Jake - he's one
of the best tattooists in the
world.

Jake stares at Victoria, astonished.

A hand appears, gripping his arm. Jake turns to see Luke, ashen faced, hollow-eyed and desperate. His long sleeved shirt is well buttoned, in contrast to the casual gear of his friends.

UNCLE KEN
Your cousin got sense. He know he'd
be dead if he come home with one of
those ... things!

Luke pulls Jake aside.

JAKE
What's up, man? Enjoying your
birthday present -

LUKE
I want to get rid of it.

(CONTINUED)

A SHOUT as a posse of Luke's friends closes in. Jake steps back as they grab Luke and hoist him up.

LUKE (CONT'D)
Hey, no! NO!

Ignoring his shouts, they carry Luke to the pool and throw him in, fully-clothed. Partygoers laugh and cheer. Uncle Ken shakes his head disapprovingly and returns to his sausages.

Luke surfaces, spluttering. Someone splashes him and he laughs reluctantly.

Victoria appears at Jake's side, laughing.

VICTORIA
Did you see their faces?

Jake watches her, unimpressed.

VICTORIA (CONT'D)
Don't tell me you've never done something just to piss your folks off.

57 EXT. SUBURBAN HOUSE DRIVEWAY - NIGHT

57

Jake strides down the path towards his car. Victoria follows him.

VICTORIA
Jake, wait up!

Jake pauses, turns on her.

JAKE
Were all those tats freebies, huh?

58 EXT. SUBURBAN HOUSE - NIGHT

58

In the crowded water, Luke stops moving. He looks around, afraid. He jerks suddenly, as if hit from below. And again.

Luke tries to reach the edge of the pool - BANG! He's pulled back into the water. His friends splash and laugh around him, oblivious to his panic.

Again, Luke is hit from below. He goes under and resurfaces, struggling. The water blooms with black ink.

(CONTINUED)

58 CONTINUED:

58

A girl looks down, noticing the ink. She sees Luke thrashing and backs away. Others do the same, scrambling for the edges.

ANGLE FROM ABOVE as Luke stands in the centre of the exodus, a black cloud spreading around him.

A girl watches, horrified, finding her voice ...

59 EXT. SUBURBAN HOUSE - NIGHT

59

Jake glares at Victoria.

VICTORIA

I thought you were up for it. That you wanted to have some fun.

JAKE

That used to be me, Victoria ...

VICTORIA

Then what do you want, Jake?

Jake meets her gaze - the answer is obvious. Victoria nods.

VICTORIA (CONT'D)

Then maybe you should go tell her.

OFFSCREEN, a girl SCREAMS. Victoria looks back in the direction of the sound.

VICTORIA (CONT'D)

I gotta go.

She turns and heads back up the path towards the house. Jake gets into his car and slams the door.

60 EXT. SUBURBAN HOUSE - NIGHT

60

The water is now completely black. Luke stands alone in the middle of the pool. CHONK! With a jerk, he's pulled under. The kids begin to SCREAM.

UNCLE KEN

Luke!

Uncle Ken jumps into the water. He dives and surfaces, searching, streaked with black ink.

Aunt Suzy screams and runs to the edge, Victoria with her.

(CONTINUED)

Uncle Ken lifts Luke out of the water. Luke gasps, his eyes wide, choking, clawing.

LUKE
He's here!

Luke is jerked from his father's grasp once again and disappears back under.

Uncle Ken searches frantically as Aunt Suzy continues to scream. The other kids watch, ashen-faced. Ken stops moving, scanning the water as it settles to a glassy black sheet.

Luke's body breaks the surface, face down. Uncle Ken grabs him and hauls him to the edge. Two TEENAGERS pull him out and lower him onto the concrete. Luke's head lolls, his eyes lifeless and glazed. Blood and ink stream from his slack jaw.

Luke's mother falls across her son's body, wailing. Victoria runs up to comfort her.

61 INT. JAKE'S CAR - NIGHT

61

Jake drives, intent, gripping the wheel. Outside, the Auckland streets are a blur. We move in, towards the bandage on his hand.

The surface of the bandage bulges, darkens, seeping black ink. The ink wells, runs down across the smooth arc of the steering wheel ...

Black ink drips from the steering wheel onto Jake's lap. He frowns, looks down ...

In the shifting glow of passing streetlights, Jake's hands appear to be covered with intricate Samoan *tatau*!

Jake GASPS ... the car swerves ... a HORN blares! Jake regains control. He looks down at his hands, now unmarked.

62 EXT. SUBURBAN HOUSE - NIGHT

62

Aunt Suzy SHRIEKS suddenly and pulls away from Luke's body, horrified -

Victoria follows her gaze, gasps in horror -

Under Luke's wet shirt, vivid lines of black spider across his chest. Samoan *tatau*! We move in towards the ragged lines and shapes.

63 INT. JAKE'S BATHROOM - NIGHT 63

The sound of running water. Jake winces as he peels off the bandage. Blood and ink patter into the basin from his suppurating wound.

He stares at his hollow-eyed reflection in the mirror, then looks down.

For a moment, the inky water leaves spidery, geometric lines of black on the white porcelain – the pattern of the *pe'a* – before it's washed away. Jake frowns ... did I just see that?

64 INT. JAKE'S BEDROOM - NIGHT 64

Jake falls back onto the bed, the hibiscus flower in his hand.

Streetlights parade across the ceiling, merging and shifting, forming geometric shapes of light and shadow.

Jake closes his eyes. The horns, booming subwoofers and hum of the street give way to the TIC-TIC-TIC-TIC of the boiler ... the TAP-TAP-TAP of *tatau*.

FADE TO BLACK

FADE IN:

65 EXT. MR VA'A'S HOUSE - DAY 65

Jake approaches the house, past dozens of cars parked outside. Music emanates from the garden. Hearing the music, Jake hesitates. Then he heads up the side of the house.

66 EXT. GARDEN - DAY 66

THUNK! The blade of a machete misses a log of wood and is embedded in the ground. Peni pulls the machete free and lines up the wood again.

Jake stands at the corner of the house, mouth open, eyes wide.

The back yard is filled with people. Hip-hoppers, clean-cut young churchgoers, middle-aged couples in *lava-lavas* and old people under sun umbrellas. The focal point is a pig on a spit, a fire under its sizzling belly.

(CONTINUED)

Towards the fence, Mr Va'a sits under a sun umbrella, surrounded by other members of the community. Beneath his *lava-lava*, his legs display dense lines of *tatau*.

A YOUNG BOY approaches him, hands him a drink. Mr Va'a beams in thanks, ruffles the kid's hair. The boy smiles as though he's just been blessed.

Jake notices Sina standing nearby. He starts towards her —

Three young Samoan guys block his path — JOE, CHARLIE and DAMON. Joe glares down at Jake.

JOE
You lost, bro?

JAKE
I'm here to see Sina.

JOE
Don't think so.

Sina appears beside them. She puts a restraining hand on Joe's arm.

SINA
Joe, don't be a dick.

Joe holds Jake's gaze for a moment, then nods. The cousins head back to their beers. Sina glares at Jake, hostile ... then softens.

SINA (CONT'D)
So which part of 'don't come back'
didn't you get?

JAKE
Sina, listen to me.

Jake glances towards the cousins, uncomfortable. They're still keeping an eye on him. He takes Sina aside.

JAKE (CONT'D)
You asked what happened to me ... I
wanna tell you.

Jake looks down at his scar, remembering.

JAKE (CONT'D)
There are things I've never told
anyone.

SINA
Things you've done?

JAKE
Things that were done to me.

He meets her eyes ...

A CHEER from the assembled crowd. Semo and Opeta, the two young men we've seen being tattooed by Alipati are helped to their feet by their friends. They both have newly-completed *pe'a*.

Their short *lava-lava* reveal the incredible extent of their finished *pe'a*: from the knees to the middle of the back, beautiful patterns follow the contours of their bodies.

SINA
You get the *pe'a* with a friend.
It's like, by sharing your pain,
you halve it.

JAKE
What if you don't finish?

SINA
Then you bring shame on yourself
and your family.

Alipati breaks an egg over Semo's head and sprinkles coconut water over him.

ALIPATI
Faalele lau pe'a!

Semo grins, looks skyward and roars a SAMOAN WARRIOR'S CHALLENGE. Opeta grins and hugs him. The onlookers clap and cheer, shaking his hand, handing him gifts – food, envelopes, traditional Samoan mats.

SINA
Now they're men.

Mr Va'a shakes Semo's hand, gripping his arm with the other. His gaze is powerful, its warmth intense.

MR VA'A
(to Semo, in Samoan)
I'm proud of you, boy.

SEMO
(in Samoan)
Thank you, Mr Va'a.

(CONTINUED)

Va'a heads back towards his chair. He pauses, greets Alipati. As Jake watches, Va'a congratulates Alipati warmly. Alipati seems touched by his gesture, deferential. Sina follows his gaze —

SINA

My uncle was a *tufuga* back in the day. Ali was his apprentice.

JAKE

Why did he stop?

SINA

Alipati was ready, and the community needed him more.

(beat)

You should really pay your respects. It's his house.

Jake eyes Mr Va'a.

Across the garden, Peni chops at the pig with the machete. As Mr Va'a passes him, he grabs the machete from Peni and shows him how it's done. HACK! HACK-HACK! Mr Va'a carves into the pig with three brutal chops.

JAKE

I might wait till he puts down the big pointy thing.

SINA

You got a skull on your shoulder. I think you can come say hi to an old man in a skirt.

Sina leads Jake across the garden.

HACK! Va'a slices another hunk out of the animal's haunch. He wields the machete like he was born with it in his hand.

Alipati sees Jake coming and steps up to whisper in Mr Va'a's ear. Va'a nods, hands the machete back to Peni.

SINA (CONT'D)

Uncle, this is Jake Sawyer. Jake, this is Mr Va'a.

Jake holds out his hand. Mr Va'a's gaze travels from Jake's outstretched hand, across the tattoos on his arms. At last, Va'a smiles warmly.

(CONTINUED)

MR VA'A

It is an honour to have you in my house.

JAKE

The honour's mine.

Mr Va'a takes Jake aside, his manner that of a wise man about to dispense wisdom.

Sina watches as Mr Va'a leads Jake away. Alipati steps up beside her.

ALIPATI

I see you made your choice.

Sina meets his eyes. His gaze is cold, disapproving.

MR VA'A

Alipati tells me you've come to Auckland to be a *tufuga*.

Jake listens respectfully to Mr Va'a.

MR VA'A (CONT'D)

Do you know the national motto of Samoa, Mr Sawyer?

Jake shakes his head.

MR VA'A (CONT'D)

Fa'avaei le Atua Samoa. 'Samoa is founded on God'. But Samoa was founded long before God arrived. Before that time, everyone had *tatau*. The *pe'a*, for men. The *malu*, for women. It gave them nobility. Pride. It connected them with their *tupuaga*. It made them strong. Then the missionaries came to Samoa. And there was no dancing allowed anymore. No singing Samoan songs. And no *tatau*. But we kept it alive, even though some of our people thought they were going against God by getting a *tatau*. People like me believed that you could worship God without sacrificing your culture, your birthright. It was hard. But *tatau* is still here, and getting stronger.

(beat)

And you come over here and expect us to hand it all back to you again?

(CONTINUED)

JAKE

I'm not a Christian, Mr Va'a.

MR VA'A

Nor are you Samoan.

(beat)

Sina will show you some hospitality. Eh, Sina? Look after our guest ... until it's time for him to leave.

She nods, leads Jake away. Mr Va'a watches after them.

CUT TO:

The sun sits low to the horizon, draining the warmth from the afternoon.

Jake and Sina sit at the edge of the section and drink from plastic cups. Across the garden, kids pack up deck chairs and umbrellas.

JAKE

So much of this ... I don't know if I'll ever understand. It's like another world. Maybe Alipati's right not to teach me.

SINA

He was wrong about one thing: you have come a long way.

(beat)

What did you want to tell me?

JAKE

(uncomfortable)

Can we go somewhere else?

SINA

I guess you've seen my world ... how about you show me where you're from?

CUT TO:

THUNK! The machete hits the ground again beside a log of wood.

PENI

Fuck!

Peni pulls the blade free and lines up another go. Sina appears at his side.

(CONTINUED)

SINA
Try closing one eye?

PENI
Real funny. What you want, anyway?

CUT TO:

Peni approaches Mr Va'a, who is supervising the cleanup of his house.

PENI (CONT'D)
Mr Va'a? My grandma's sick. She needs someone to look after her tonight while I'm at work.

MR VA'A
Take Sina with you.
(shouts to Sina)
Sina! You go with Peni tonight, look after his grandmother.

SINA
Yes, uncle.

Peni passes Sina, on his way inside. He gives her the nod - mission accomplished. She nods back - owe ya one.

67 EXT/INT. MOTORWAY/JAKE'S CAR - EVENING

67

The sun sits low over the hills. The city is golden as Jake and Sina drive towards it.

Jake looks over at Sina. She sits back in her seat and smiles at him. He smiles back.

68 INT. BEDLAM TATTOO STUDIO - NIGHT

68

Jake shows Sina into the dark shop. Mirrors reflect their silhouetted shapes against the passing lights of the road. Sina looks at the designs on the walls of the shop.

JAKE
I used to dream about this, when I was starting out. My own place ... my own designs. A few regulars.

SINA
What do you dream about now?

(CONTINUED)

JAKE

You wouldn't want to know.

SINA

(nods towards his tattoos)

I want to see them.

Jake takes off his shirt. Her eyes travel across his skin. She reaches out to touch an old-school tattoo on his shoulder.

JAKE

Crash gave me that, in San Francisco. I was celebrating - my first job, my first paycheck.

(sadly)

I felt like I could do anything.

Jake closes his eyes as Sina runs her fingers across his back.

JAKE (CONT'D)

Got that in Berlin. I was cold. Broke. I loved it.

Sina laughs. She reaches down, running her hand across the pale ridge of his scar.

SINA

What about that?

BAM! A man's hand grabs Young Jake's wrist, wrenches the arm around to reveal the fresh rose tattoo.

FATHER (O.S.)

You've brought shame on our house.

The TIC-TIC-TIC of the boiler, close. Jake is pinned in the dark corner.

The knife blade is heated against the hot metal until it glows.

JAKE (V.O.)

I was thirteen. My father was a Lutheran minister ...

FATHER (O.S.)

Your flesh is my flesh, your blood is my blood.

The blade flashes —

JAKE (V.O.)
He was ashamed.

FATHER (O.S.)
We will not defile the temple of
the lord!

The dark shape of JAKE'S FATHER bends over Jake to work the knife.

Young Jake looks up in terror as a heavy gold CRUCIFIX dangles in front of his face, swinging as his father saws at his flesh.

FATHER (O.S.) (CONT'D)
Pray with me boy. Pray with me.
'Our father who art in heaven ...'

Father steps back, holding up the ragged, dripping strip of Young Jake's flesh. SCREECH! He pulls open the iron door of the boiler —

Young Jake's eyes widen —

As his Father casts the tattoo into the boiler and SLAMS the door closed. TIC-TIC-TIC-TIC ...

INSIDE, the raging glow consumes Jake's flesh as the ticking of the boiler continues around us.

70 INT. BEDLAM TATTOO STUDIO - NIGHT

70

Jake's expression is cold, hard. Sina looks appalled.

JAKE
I left after that. I never went
back.

Sina kisses him gently on the side of his neck. She closes her eyes.

SINA
I want a tattoo.

JAKE
Won't they be angry if you get a
palagi tattoo?

(CONTINUED)

SINA

This isn't for them. This is for me.

JAKE

What do you want?

SINA

The *tufuga* decides.

CUT TO:

An expanse of Sina's golden skin seems to glow in the dim light. Jake runs his hands across her back, tracing the contours of her body, judging the right place for the perfect design.

Jake's needle begins to buzz. Sina grits her teeth, takes the pain.

Jake focuses ... a distant TAP-TAP-TAP joins the BUZZING of his needle ... the sounds continue over -

71 INT. FUNERAL HOME PREPARATION ROOM - NIGHT 71

A sterile embalmer's preparation room, deep in shadow. Tools are laid out, next to a chart and several reference photographs of Luke. Machines switched on. BAMF! An overhead light illuminates -

A body, under a sheet. The sheet is spotted with blooms of black in.

72 INT. BEDLAM TATTOO STUDIO - NIGHT 72

Jake's needle shapes, hones, defines ... a huge design taking shape, its scope as yet unrevealed ... TAP-TAP-TAP ...

73 INT. GRAHAM'S HOUSE - DAWN 73

A bottle of sleeping pills on a dresser ... moving to find Chanel, Graham's girlfriend, asleep under a pink eye mask.

She turns over, onto a pool of glistening black on peach-coloured satin sheets. She pulls off the eye-mask, frowning, peels back the sheet with a wet slurping noise.

CHANEL

(croaks)

Gray ..?

- 74 INT. BEDLAM TATTOO STUDIO - NIGHT 74
 Jake colours in a section of Sina's tattoo, blood-red ...
- 75 INT. FUNERAL HOME PREPARATION ROOM - NIGHT 75
 His preparations complete, the EMBALMER pulls back the sheet from Luke's head ... and recoils violently at some horror unseen.
 Luke's hand slips, dangling from under the sheet. It is covered now in Samoan *tatau* - even Luke's fingernails have been tattooed. Beyond, we can see that the *tatau* covers the body.
- 76 INT. BEDLAM TATTOO STUDIO - NIGHT 76
 Jake's needle paints a thick, dark curve along Sina's shoulder blade ...
- 77 INT. GRAHAM'S HOUSE - NIGHT 77
 The tattooing sounds continue as Chanel follows a slick trail of glistening black gloop across the carpet towards a closed *en suite* door. She looks down ...
 Black squelches up between her toes from the carpet.
- CHANEL
 Baby Gray ... what are you doing in there?
- Frightened now, she pushes the door open slowly, revealing a trail of glistening black ink on white marble, a spreading pool at Graham's motionless feet ...
- 78 INT. BEDLAM OFFICE - NIGHT 78
 Jake and Sina make love on the couch in Crash's office, her new tattoo almost luminous in the glow of the dancing lights from the street.
- 79 INT. VARIOUS - NIGHT 79
 The images reach crescendo: needle on skin, skin on skin, ink, sweat and blood ...

(CONTINUED)

the ink splattered floor of Graham's bathroom ... the ink stains on the sheet covering Luke bloom and spread ...

Chanel finally finds her voice, and SCREEEEEEEEAMS –

And we see the completed tattoo on Sina's back: A RED HIBISCUS FLOWER painted in vibrant colour – Jake's boldest work yet, undeniably influenced by everything he has seen and learned. The graphic image dissolves to ...

THE HIBISCUS FLOWER from before, now wilted and lifeless in its glass beside Jake's bed.

– as Jake and Sina lie back, entangled, their breathing slowing, calm returning as the chaotic sounds ebb.

SINA

Why did you tattoo those people, if you didn't share their beliefs? For the money?

JAKE

Because they're pathetic ... they're weak.

SINA

It's not weak to have faith.

JAKE

It is when you hide behind it ... use it to hurt people.

SINA

Did you ever think maybe your father was scared? And maybe now he's somewhere where he doesn't have to be anymore?

Silence, then:

JAKE

He lives in Wisconsin, in the house I grew up in. I haven't spoken to him in ten years.

SINA

My parents are dead. I can't ever make that pain go away. But it's not too late for you.

80 CONTINUED:

80

Jake stares at the ceiling, his expression dark, conflicted.

CUT TO:

81 INT. BEDLAM OFFICE - NIGHT (LATER)

81

Jake stirs, restless. In the darkness, Sina MOANS softly.

Jake looks over at her. She frowns, twitches, eyes darting under her lids - in the grip of a nightmare.

82 EXT. BEDLAM TATTOO STUDIO - DAY

82

Jake and Sina stand on the footpath outside Bedlam.

JAKE

Can't you stay?

SINA

If I'm not at church, people will ask questions.

Jake looks disappointed.

SINA (CONT'D)

One step at a time, okay?

JAKE

So all that stuff about this not being for them ... about it being for you ...

SINA

It's for both of us.

She kisses him, then pulls away. He watches as she walks away down the street.

83 INT. APARTMENT - DAY

83

Jake enters, slams the door.

VICTORIA (O.S.)

Where have you been?

Victoria is standing in the shadows at the end of the room.

JAKE

You can't keep ...

(CONTINUED)

He trails off at the sight of her: drawn and haggard looking.

JAKE (CONT'D)
Shit, are you okay?

VICTORIA
Luke's dead.

JAKE
How?

VICTORIA
My aunt and uncle's pool. In five feet of water ... in front of thirty people.

JAKE
That's terrible.

VICTORIA
It was a birthday present. I wanted him to be cool ... not dead.

JAKE
What are you talking about?

VICTORIA
He was covered in tattoos. Tattoos that weren't there two days ago.

Jake frowns.

VICTORIA (CONT'D)
They were all over him, Jake.

JAKE
Tattoos don't just do themselves.

VICTORIA
Then who did them, Jake? Did he come back for more? Cause I've been thinking about it and thinking about it and I just can't see how else this happened.

JAKE
Victoria, whatever happened, it was nothing to do with me.

VICTORIA
My uncle's calling the Health Department. He wants to press charges against Bedlam.

The phone rings. Jake snatches it up.

JAKE
Sina?

IVAN (O.S.)
(on phone)
I said there was always room. But
there's not a lot left now ...

JAKE
Who is this?

IVAN (O.S.)
(on phone)
You started it, boy ... and now
he's nearly finished it.

JAKE
(thinks hard)
Ivan?

CLICK! The line goes dead. Jake stares at the receiver,
stunned. He grabs the phone book, rifles through.

JAKE (CONT'D)
Peters ... Peterson ...

VICTORIA
Jake, did you hear what I said?
They think it's your fault.

JAKE
Petrovich!

Jake slams the phone book shut and heads for the front door.

VICTORIA
Who was that on the phone? Jake,
I'm scared.

JAKE
It was another guy I tattooed.

And he's gone. She looks away, her mind racing ...

Tyres squeal as the Bedlam car pulls away from Jake's
apartment.

85 INT. APARTMENT BATHROOM - DAY 85

Victoria steps into the bathroom and turns on the light. She stares blankly at her wretched reflection in the mirror, then looks down, steeling herself.

She pulls up her top. Her eyes widen in horror.

86 EXT. BLOCK OF FLATS - DAY 86

Jake slams his car door outside a large block of council flats in a tree-lined street. The windows make a ragged patchwork of curtains, washing and wall hangings.

87 INT. STAIRWELL - DAY 87

Jake races up the dirty, glass walled stairwell. Reflections of himself surround him, shifting and moving as he climbs.

88 INT. BLOCK OF FLATS - DAY 88

Jake emerges on an upper landing and searches the apartment doors. He stops at one. All the curtains are closed. Jake bangs on the door.

JAKE
Ivan? It's Jake!

Silence. He bangs again. The door swings open. Jake steps inside.

89 INT. IVAN'S FLAT - DAY 89

Jake peers into darkness.

JAKE
Hello?

Jake creeps into the living area. The room is trashed, as if a struggle has taken place. A large mirror on the wall is cracked, streaked with ink.

JAKE (CONT'D)
(calls)
Ivan!

(CONTINUED)

CRUNCH. Jake looks down – he has stepped on the broken remains of a light bulb. He looks up – the bulb has been crushed in its fitting.

A thick breath from the darkness. Jake wheels. A dark shape sits in the gloom.

JAKE (CONT'D)

Ivan? Jesus ...

The figure laughs, quickly breaking into a hacking wet cough.

Jake crosses to the windows and reaches for the curtains.

JAKE (CONT'D)

Let's get some light –

IVAN

Don't!

Jake pauses. A thin shaft of daylight streams in.

Ivan huddles, rocking gently, an inky shadow. Only the whites of his eyes catch the light. He leans forward, the light catches a narrow strip of skin. Ivan is so covered in *pe'a* that he seems black. Only tiny fragments of pale skin remain visible.

IVAN (CONT'D)

The space between the points ...
it's the killing space ...

JAKE

What are you talking about?

IVAN

He's finishing what you started.
(clicks his tongue)
TIC-TIC-TIC ... TIC-TIC-TIC ...

JAKE

Who did this to you?

Ivan rises slowly out of his chair, bones creaking.

IVAN

The '*au* ... the *sausau* ...

Ivan moves through the shaft of light, revealing more ghastly detail on his naked old body. Woven into the *pe'a* are the tattoos that already covered him, including Jake's. Ivan mutters in guttural Samoan:

(CONTINUED)

IVAN (CONT'D)
 (in Samoan)
*... the ink ... the shame that
 drives my fury ...*

Jake backs away towards the door.

JAKE
 I'll get doctors.

Ivan reaches out a blackened hand, the flesh of his arm withered and wet. The ridges and patterns gleam in the light.

IVAN
 (starts to laugh)
 Flay my bones ... my black heart
 bare ...

Ivan's tattooed face leers into his, blackened teeth visible behind tattooed lips.

Ivan pauses ... then looks towards the mirror, SCREAMS -

Jake wheels, catching a fleeting glimpse of a dark, wiry shape as it sweeps across the broken glass.

IVAN (CONT'D)
 He's coming again!

JAKE
 Who?

Ivan starts to sing under his breath in Samoan - the lilting song from Jake's dreams. TAP-TAP-TAP! The sound reverberates around them. Jake grabs Ivan's wrists, trying to snap him out of it.

JAKE (CONT'D)
 Ivan, WHO'S COMING?!

IVAN
 He's finishing ... what you
 started!

Ivan lunges, GROWLING. His skin breaks apart under Jake's fingers, flesh seeping black ink. Jake gasps in horror and stumbles back towards the door. He claws at the handle and wrenches it open ...

90 INT. BLOCK OF FLATS – AFTERNOON 90

Jake stumbles through the door and races away from the flat. The door slams shut behind him.

91 INT. APARTMENT – DAY – CONTINUOUS 91

Jake crashes into his apartment. He slams the door behind him and locks it.

He picks up the phone and dials frantically, waits.

JAKE

Come on, Sina ... pick up ...

He stops. The sound of WATER RUNNING. Jake frowns, replaces the receiver.

Jake creeps tentatively through the apartment towards the bathroom. Steam billows out into the hallway. Water spreads out across the floor in a dark stain.

Water puddles around his feet, mixed with black ink. The ink forms the intricate filigrees of a *pe'a* design, then dissolves.

Jake pushes the bathroom door open ...

92 INT. APARTMENT BATHROOM – DAY 92

A pale figure is ghosted behind the glass: Victoria.

She looks up at him, her eyes bloodshot.

JAKE

(frustrated)

Victoria ...

He looks down ... the water swirling around her feet is black! Alarmed, Jake pulls the door open –

Her belly is a ragged black wound. Black ichor and blood spill down her legs to bloom in the water. Her hand comes up slowly and uncurls to reveal STEEL WOOL and fingers black with ink.

Victoria looks up through her hair, mouth open in wordless horror. She trembles, gasps ... and SCREEEEEEEEAMS!

93 INT. JAKE'S CAR - DAY 93

Jake drives frantically. Victoria moans from the back seat. She's wrapped in a sheet.

JAKE

Hold on!

He looks to the rear view mirror - and glimpses a wiry shape in the back seat, looming over Victoria - TAP-TAP-TAP! Jake slams on the brakes and the car screeches to a halt. He turns to look -

Victoria writhes in pain. Ink smears the seats. She is alone.

VICTORIA

It huuuurrrrrrrttttts!

Jake slams the car into gear and peels away.

94 EXT. HOSPITAL - DAY 94

Jake's car pulls up with a squeal outside Accident and Emergency. He jumps out, throws open the back door and lifts out Victoria.

95 INT. HOSPITAL - DAY 95

Jake carries Victoria through the doors. The sheet is twisted around Victoria's body and sodden with blooms of black ink. A line of ink drips onto the gleaming lino.

JAKE

Somebody - we need help!

He staggers toward the reception desk. Victoria begins to slip from his arms, the sheet pulling around her. Jake drops to his knees.

A NURSE comes running.

NURSE

What happened?

JAKE

She's ... sick.

The nurse pulls at the sheet. Ink puddles out and spreads across the floor. The nurse recoils in horror, looking down at the ink on her fingers.

(CONTINUED)

JAKE (CONT'D)
Please help her.

NURSE
(shouts)
Doctor Faleauto!

The nurse backs away from Jake and Victoria. Beyond, other PATIENTS in the waiting room have risen to their feet, horrified.

A MATRON appears, aghast.

MATRON
(to the Nurse)
What is it?

NURSE
I don't know.

Black slime runs from Victoria's mouth. Her eyes roll.

DOCTOR FALEAUTO, a young Samoan attending physician, and a SECOND NURSE run up, pushing a gurney.

DR FALEAUTO
On three. One ... two ... three -

BANG! Led by Dr Faleauto, a posse of doctors and nurses burst through double doors into the emergency area. Victoria writhes on a gurney, ink already soaking into the mattress. The gurney leaves a trail of black ink across the floor. Jake follows the grisly caravan.

DR FALEAUTO
What's her name?

JAKE
Victoria.

DR FALEAUTO
Victoria, can you hear me? How long have you been feeling sick?

She lurches, coughs a torrent of black ink over the medical team. It streaks their hospital whites.

VICTORIA
Ask ... him ...

DR FALEAUTO

Have you taken any drugs, Victoria?
Do you have any allergies?

Jake stands helpless, devastated, as they push the gurney into a trauma room.

97 INT. TRAUMA ROOM - DAY

97

A SECOND DOCTOR and more NURSES have joined those hovering over Victoria on the table. A nurse vainly tries to staunch the black ink discharging from Victoria's belly.

Victoria's tattoo snakes out of the wound and covers her chest and shoulders - her own stylised classic imagery broken down and distorted by the pe'a motif.

Jake hovers, stricken. Victoria grabs his arm, her grip strong, her fingertips leaving black smears on his skin.

VICTORIA

Jake ...

JAKE

I'm here.

VICTORIA

What happened to Luke ... not you
... him.

Her eyes roll back, eyelids fluttering. The doctors push Jake aside.

NURSE

B.P. sixty over forty and dropping.

DR FALEAUTO

Get a line in. Push twenty of epi.

A nurse tries to find a vein in her arm with a shaking hand. A needle pierces flesh. The skin breaks apart, discharging a thin sheet of ink that washes down Victoria's tattooed arm onto the bed.

SECOND NURSE

Trouble finding a vein.

SECOND DOCTOR

Come on!

NURSE

Twenty epi in.

(CONTINUED)

SECOND NURSE

Okay, got it!

Jet black liquid streams into the clear tube from Victoria's arm.

SECOND NURSE (CONT'D)

Oh my god ...

SECOND DOCTOR

Get that out. What have you hit?

NURSE

B.P. fifty over thirty. Still dropping.

DR FALEAUTO

(to Jake)

Has she been overseas? How long has she been sick?

JAKE

I don't know.

BEEP-BEEP-BEEP-BEEP-BEEP-BEEP — a shrill alarm goes off.

NURSE

She's arrested.

SECOND DOCTOR

Another twenty epi. Charge paddles to one-eighty and clear.

NURSE

Paddles one-eighty.

She hands the doctor the defibrillator paddles.

SECOND NURSE

Twenty epi in.

SECOND DOCTOR

Clear, dammit!

DR FALEAUTO

Clear.

NURSE

Clear.

The doctor places the paddles against Victoria's chest — WHUMP! She jolts horribly. Another torrent of ink spills from her mouth.

(CONTINUED)

NURSE (CONT'D)

Still down.

SECOND DOCTOR

Charge two hundred.

DR FALEAUTO

Clear!

WHUMP! The lights spark above Victoria. The room flickers in and out of darkness.

Amid the frantic medical staff is another shape, glimpsed between light and shadow -

THE TATTOOIST, crouched over Victoria, his back to Jake. A broken, infected-looking *pe'a* twists up the Tattooist's back. In one hand he grasps a bloody bone chisel, in the other a hammer.

TAP-TAP-CLANG! The Tattooist's hammer falls, spraying ink.

JAKE

There! Can't you see him?

The doctors continue work on Victoria, oblivious to the spectre upon her.

WHUMP! The lights flicker on again, and the Tattooist is gone. Victoria is lifted off the bed by the defibrillator, her back arched.

SECOND DOCTOR

Charge two-ten.

(indicates Jake)

Get him out of here!

A nurse SCREAMS. CLANG! CLANG-CLANG! In three violent jolts, one of the few areas untouched by the *pe'a* is filled in black with brutal accuracy. The medical team freezes for a moment, stunned. Dr Faleauto looks at Jake.

DR FALEAUTO

What the hell is this?

SECOND DOCTOR

Two-ten. Clear?

NURSE

Clear.

(CONTINUED)

The Doctor positions the paddles, pushes them down – SPLUCK! His hands break through Victoria's chest, disappearing INTO the cavity. Tattooed ribs point up around the Doctor's wrists as black liquid wells around them.

The Doctor yelps and wrenches his hands free, leaving the paddles immersed in her chest, wires trailing. He staggers away, mewling, horrified.

Victoria breaks down as the *tatau* consumes her before their eyes. Her flesh sloughs away to reveal organs black with *pe'a*, themselves losing cohesion and dissolving into ink.

Two nurses are screaming now. They cower at the end of the room.

Jake watches in horror as Victoria bangs and thrashes on the table as black ink sprays from her mouth. Her flesh collapses into itself as her torso falls away. Ink drips off the bed onto the floor.

Dr Faleauto steps back as the other medics panic around him.

DR FALEAUTO
(calmly)
Quarantine procedure. Nobody
leaves.

Jake looks around at their horrified faces, then starts backing away.

DR FALEAUTO (CONT'D)
Security! SECURITY!

Jake pushes through the door.

Jake slips on the shiny floor, leaving inky footprints as he runs away down the corridor. Dr Faleauto crashes through the doors behind him, his whites sprayed with black.

DR FALEAUTO
Security – stop him!

A SECURITY GUARD blocks the way. Jake wheels, ducks down a passage. The doctor follows.

Round a corner, down a passage. A stairwell – Jake takes them three at a time. Jake runs down a long corridor and rounds a corner. He looks back – he's lost his pursuers.

He leans against the wall, panting. The full horror hits him hard and he loses it, shaking. His breath catches in his throat ... he bites down on his knuckles.

FOOTSTEPS, and Dr Faleauto rounds the corner. Snapping out of it, Jake runs. He follows the passage down, around another corner, past a closed fire escape –

A dead end! Jake spins, heads back towards the fire escape. Doctor Faleauto steps up to challenge him.

JAKE

Please ...

DR FALEAUTO

Took my brother six weeks to get his *pe'a*. Nearly killed him. Never thought I'd see someone get one in six minutes.

JAKE

There's no time.

DR FALEAUTO

You said 'can you see him'. See who?

JAKE

Do you believe in spirits?

The doctor stares at him, stunned.

DR FALEAUTO

You think a spirit did this?

JAKE

There's another one ... a girl, in Otara. You have to let me go.

The doctor narrows his eyes, considering this.

JAKE (CONT'D)

I have to get to her, find a way to stop this, or she'll die.

Then he steps aside. Jake pushes open the door. As he steps through, Dr Faleauto puts a hand on Jake's arm.

DR FALEAUTO

Whatever you've started, don't bring it back here. This isn't something doctors can cure.

98 CONTINUED: (2)

98

Jake meets his eyes, then nods and disappears through the door.

99 INT. CHURCH/ARCHIVE - AFTERNOON

99

Sina sorts through the box of photos she got from Mr Perenese. Taking out a photo, she frowns ...

The photo is of the Perenese family, posing in front of the church. Mr Perenese stands proudly in the centre of a group composed of his wife, his four daughters and ... the edge of the photo has been torn away.

CRREEEEEEAAAAAK-BANG! A door slams closed somewhere outside the office. Sina goes to the archive door.

SINA

(calls)

Is someone there?

No reply. Spooked, Sina returns to her desk and continues sorting the pictures.

A dark shape fills the doorway behind her. She senses someone there, turns -

JAKE

They're dead.

Jake stands just inside the door, his face haunted. He's covered in grisly splatters of ink.

SINA

What are you doing here?

JAKE

He killed them. Luke and Ivan ...
Victoria. Everyone I tattooed. Ever
since I hurt myself with this.

He holds out the tool he took from the Samoans in Singapore.

SINA

This is Alipati's ... Jake, you
can't keep this.

JAKE

I would have given it back, only I
was afraid he wouldn't teach me!
(beat)
They couldn't see him, but I could
... I could see him killing her!

(CONTINUED)

SINA

He's skinny, with long hair. He
looks sick ... his *pe'a's* bleeding.
His eyes ...

JAKE

You've seen him too.

SINA

It was just a dream ...

Sina stands in front of the mirror, Jake behind her. She
unbuttons her top, then pauses ... she looks, in the mirror,
to Jake ...

And pulls off her top.

Jake's eyes widen as he looks at her back. Slowly, fearfully,
she turns to look at her reflection. Fine lines of raw, black
tatau spider outwards from the hibiscus flower - the
beginnings of the nightmare *pe'a*.

SINA

How long?

JAKE

Sina -

SINA

Days?

Silence, then:

JAKE

Hours.

Sina's horror is mounting. Jake moves to comfort her.

JAKE (CONT'D)

Sina, I'll -

WHAP! Sina slaps him, again and again. Jake accepts the
blows.

SINA

I trusted you!

JAKE

I didn't know!

100 CONTINUED:

100

SINA
Stay away from me!

101 INT. CHURCH FOYER – NIGHT

101

Sina runs down the hallway towards the church doors. Jake chases after her.

JAKE
Sina, wait –

SINA
Alipati and my uncle were right – I should never have gotten involved with you!

He grabs her, holds her tight. She struggles –

JAKE
I promise I'll help you.

She stops struggling and meets his eyes.

SINA
You promised to 'help' those other people, too, but you didn't really believe it. Why should I believe you now?

That hits Jake where it hurts. She pushes through the doors into the church.

INSIDE, Sina runs up the centre aisle and stumbles in front of the altar. The MINISTER hurries over to her.

Jake moves to follow –

Mr Va'a gets up from the front row of pews and stands over Sina. She looks up at him, her face streaked with tears.

Jake hesitates. He takes the tattooing tool out of his pocket, steeling himself ...

102 EXT. OTARA SHOPPING CENTRE – NIGHT

102

Dark in the shopping centre, shops closed. A few groups of youths drink, smoke and laugh. Jake hurries through the shadows, looking back over his shoulder. A car revs suddenly, the nitro kicking in, and Jake jumps in fright.

(CONTINUED)

He reaches the door of Alipati's garage. A light inside. Jake knocks, frantic. After a few moments, Alipati opens the door and regards him, expressionless.

ALIPATI

What you want this time? Singing lessons?

Jake opens his hand, shows Alipati the tool. Alipati's eyes widen as he takes it.

ALIPATI (CONT'D)

You take anything else? Shirt off my back maybe? Or is that everything?

JAKE

(shakes his head)
There's more.

SINA'S TATTOO has spread further. Mr Va'a looks at it closely, his eyes following every line of the expanding *pe'a* design.

SINA

Uncle, what is it?

VA'A

Cover yourself up.

Sina does. She faces him, trembling, terrified ... pleading. Va'a watches her, compassionate, saddened.

VA'A (CONT'D)

My wife and I, we never had children. You are the closest I have to a daughter ... and I'm so ashamed.

Sina crumbles, tears spilling down her face. Va'a, too, looks deeply aggrieved.

VA'A (CONT'D)

You run around with this *palagi* ... embarrass me in front of everyone. And now he give you the *pe'a*, not the *malu* as a woman should have?

SINA

He didn't -

VA'A

You hate me this much?

She shakes her head, devastated, lost.

SINA

Uncle, I don't hate you.

VA'A

You know I should turn my back on you. How will they forgive this?

He is crying now.

SINA

What am I supposed to do?

Va'a takes the silver crucifix from around his neck. His hand shakes as he holds it out to her.

VA'A

Same as the rest of us - pray to God, that he will show you the way.

Sina stares at the cross, undecided ...

VA'A (CONT'D)

It's the only way.

Sina's trembling hand closes around the crucifix.

Jake sits on the couch, his head in his hands. Alipati paces, muttering. He looks down at Jake and shakes his head.

ALIPATI

I've worked for years to make people see *tatau* for what it is. Pride. Honour. A birthright for all Samoans. But there's always people like you, come along and think they can take without asking -

JAKE

I did ask.

ALIPATI

And I said no!

JAKE

If I can find out what this spirit
wants, maybe I can -

ALIPATI

What? Take him to Mickey D's and
buy him a Happy Meal?

Jake faces up to Alipati, his fists balled. Then he backs
down.

JAKE

I've seen how they die.

105 INT. CHURCH - NIGHT

105

Sina sits hunched in the front row of the church. Around her,
the sound of singing from the assembled congregation. Sina's
mouth moves in muttered prayer.

Beyond the hymn, an undercurrent of TAPPING. Sina's prayer
falters.

JAKE (V.O.)

First the sounds, the visions ...
the tattoo, it grows. Then the ink,
from everywhere, like blood.

A cough wracks Sina and she doubles over, her hand going to
her mouth. As the spasm subsides, she looks down in horror
... to see flecks of black ink on her hand.

JAKE (V.O.) (CONT'D)

She'll scream and beg for the end ...

106 INT. ALIPATI'S GARAGE - NIGHT

106

Now Jake has Alipati's full attention.

JAKE

... and then she's gone.

ALIPATI

This spirit's doing this to people
you tattoo, right?

Jake nods.

(CONTINUED)

ALIPATI (CONT'D)

Then I'll make this real easy – get your arse on the next plane out of here, and don't tattoo anyone else.

(beat)

Ever.

JAKE

But she'll die.

ALIPATI

Maybe ... maybe not.

JAKE

You know something, don't you?

ALIPATI

This ain't your lookout, brutha.

JAKE

Listen, whether you like it or not, my eyes are open now.

ALIPATI

That right? Then how come you still stumbling round in the dark?

(beat)

Now get out of my garage.

107 EXT. ALIPATI'S GARAGE - NIGHT

107

SLAM! Alipati slams the door behind Jake. Frustrated, Jake kicks over a rubbish bin.

COUSIN (O.S.)

Ain't you never heard of 'be a tidy Kiwi'?

Jake turns to see Osone's two cousins hanging out beside their car. Jake recognises them, approaches. They watch him coolly.

JAKE

The other day, there was a kid with you.

COUSIN

Dunno what you mean.

JAKE

Come on ... he said someone was following me.

(CONTINUED)

OSONE (O.S.)
Skinny fella. Dead as.

Jake turns to see Osonе, a skateboard in his hand. He nods.

JAKE
I need to know what he wants. Can
you ... ask him?

OSONE
Nup.
(beat)
You can aks him your own self. But
that'll cost ya.

JAKE
How much?

OSONE
Fiddy bucks. For me and my cousins.

JAKE
Fiddy?

OSONE
Each.

The cousins grin.

108 INT/EXT. COUSINS' CAR/MOTORWAY - NIGHT

108

Jake sits in the back seat of the car, Osonе next to him. The
seat is covered with clear plastic. Hip-hop bass pounds
around them.

Osonе's two cousins are crammed into the front seat, eyes
straight ahead as they drive.

JAKE
Where are we going?

OSONE
Louder.

The cousin in the passenger seat turns up the radio.

Jake cringes as the bass gets even louder. He looks outside
to see the towering street lamps of the Auckland motorway
passing at speed.

Osonе closes his eyes.

(CONTINUED)

108 CONTINUED:

108

OSONE (CONT'D)

Louder.

109 INT. OSONE'S COUSINS' CAR - NIGHT

109

Cringing, deafened, Jake looks around anxiously as the bass reaches earth-shattering proportions. Lights seem to fly past the window. Jake grips the door, his knuckles white.

Osonone's eyes dart under his eyelids. A thin line of blood trickles from one of his nostrils.

Suddenly, the pounding bass is obliterated as a burst of STATIC rips through the car, a deafening pulse of white noise that oscillates with an undercurrent of angry whispering.

The cousin driving the car brakes hard.

110 EXT. AUCKLAND MOTORWAY - NIGHT

110

The car slams into a sharp skid, sliding sideways onto the hard shoulder and coming to a stop. A car behind swerves around it, laying on the horn.

111 INT. OSONE'S COUSINS' CAR - NIGHT

111

The roar of whispers is deafening. Jake blocks his ears.

Osonone convulses. Spots of blood flick from his nose and ears, splattering the plastic covering the car's interior. Terrified, Jake tries to hold him.

JAKE

What's happening ..?!

The cousins watch impassively from the front seat as Osonone convulses. His hand whips out and grabs Jake's arm, vice-like.

His voice booms – an adult voice. Multiple lines of song overlap in a distorted, hair-raising cacophony:

OSONE/TATTOOIST

*O Le Tatau A Victoriaoa/I le
mafuaaga lenei na iloa/I le taaga o
le tatau i Victoriaoa/O le malaga a
teine e toalua ...*

JAKE

What's he saying?

(CONTINUED)

COUSIN
Something about *tatau*.

JAKE
(to Ostone/Tattooist)
Who are you?

OSONE/TATTOOIST
(Samoan)
I am the 'au and the sausau ...

COUSIN
The tattooing tools!

OSONE/TATTOOIST
(Samoan)
I am the singer and the song ...

COUSIN
The singer and the song.

OSONE/TATTOOIST
(Samoan)
The killer and the dead ...

COUSIN
The killer and the dead!

JAKE
What do you want?

OSONE/TATTOOIST
(Samoan)
To kill.

COUSIN
He says he wants to kill.

JAKE
Why?

The Tattooist's roar shakes the car!

OSONE/TATTOOIST
(in English)
THE SHAME!!!

JAKE
What are you ashamed of?

The static seems to reach a crescendo as The Tattooist's roar
echoes around them –

(CONTINUED)

JAKE (CONT'D)

TELL ME!

BOOM-BOOM-BOOM ... the static gives way to deafening hip-hop once again. The cousin in the passenger seat flips off the radio. Silence descends.

Osona sits up. He wipes blood off his upper lip.

JAKE (CONT'D)

Get him back - I'm not finished!

COUSIN

Can't do that, brother - he's just the smaller, eh.

DRIVER COUSIN

(giggles)

Like a medium - but smaller!

The cousins crack up at the joke.

OSONE

You can't boss those ones around, eh. They're pure. Angry - that's it. You wanna try bossing round a thunderstorm? Or ... a piece of wood?

JAKE

Okay, I get it, I get it. So what am I supposed to do now?

OSONE

Quit your job?

JAKE

I already got that advice for free.

DRIVER COUSIN

Tatau ain't really our field of expertise, eh.

COUSIN

(to Driver Cousin)

You were too chicken to get yours, eh?

DRIVER COUSIN

Shut up!

Jake's mind is racing.

(CONTINUED)

111 CONTINUED: (3)

111

JAKE

Take me to church.

COUSIN

Sweet as. For twennie bucks.

DRIVER COUSIN

And petrol money.

Jake digs in his wallet.

OSONE

Man upstairs ain't gonna help you
out.

JAKE

It's his flock I want to talk to.

112 INT. CHURCH - NIGHT

112

The Minister stands before the congregation. The churchgoers are on their feet, united in song. Their voices soar toward the heavens.

At the front of the congregation, Sina sits with her head bowed over Va'a's silver crucifix necklace. Her eyes are closed as her lips move in prayer. A HAND on her shoulder ... Mr Va'a, standing next to her, singing loudly.

BANG! The church doors swing open, framing Jake.

At the pulpit, the Minister stops in mid-song. Churchgoers follow his gaze, including Mr Va'a. Sina looks up, dazed with shock and fear.

The song peters out as Jake strides down the aisle. By the time he reaches the front, a blanket of shocked silence has descended. All eyes are on Jake.

Mr Va'a steps into the aisle, a hand on Sina's shoulder.

MR VA'A

You are not welcome in this house.

JAKE

Please ... *tufuga*.

Mr Va'a is taken aback at Jake's deference.

(CONTINUED)

JAKE (CONT'D)

An angry spirit is using me to kill. If I can learn who he is, I might be able to stop him.

The churchgoers mutter to each other – what's he talking about?

MR VA'A

Don't bring your *palagi* nonsense in here.

JAKE

Sina, show them.

MR VA'A

She doesn't need your help.

Sina looks up at him, the crucifix clutched in her hand. She doesn't look so sure.

MR VA'A (CONT'D)

(to Sina)

You tell him, you place yourself in God's hands tonight.

She gets to her feet.

MR VA'A (CONT'D)

Sina!

JAKE

Sina, please ... trust me.

Mr Va'a steps close to Jake and Sina, his voice lowered, heavy with shame. The community listens with bated breath.

MR VA'A

You have damned her body, boy – will you take her soul as well?

JAKE

Sina, God can't stop this ... but I can.

Sina looks between them, making up her mind.

SINA

Uncle, I'm sorry ...

MR VA'A

You are not my *Aiga*.

(CONTINUED)

She meets Va'a's gaze, devastated ... then steps past him into the aisle.

JAKE

Show them.

She raises her top, revealing her tattoo to the congregation.

In the congregation, a WOMAN in her late 20s stands with her HUSBAND. Her eyes widen with recognition, her hand goes to her mouth. She looks around for support.

Mr Va'a's expression roils with barely contained fury. His fists clench tight and release, clench and release.

JAKE (CONT'D)

(to the congregation)

The spirit who did this will continue, until she's dead ... or until his shame is ended.

MR VA'A

(to the congregation)

No, this is our business!

Up the back, the woman's husband places his hand on her arm.

HUSBAND

(sotto)

Let Mr Va'a deal with this.

JAKE

(to Va'a)

You turn your backs on people you're ashamed of. But if you turn your back on her, it's you who should be ashamed.

SINA

Uncle, please let them speak.

MR VA'A

(roars)

I said LEAVE!

Mr Va'a faces the Minister. He starts to sing, loudly, confidently. Around Jake and Sina, the congregation joins in, uncertain at first, until the church is once again filled with song.

Sina takes Jake's hand and begins to drag him down the aisle towards the door.

(CONTINUED)

112 CONTINUED: (3)

112

JAKE
YOU CAN'T JUST LET HER DIE!

The woman in the congregation watches Jake and Sina pass. She looks around, catches the eye of some of the others. They nod encouragement – go on.

113 EXT. CHURCH - NIGHT

113

Jake bursts through the church doors, supporting Sina. As they stumble away from the church, Sina staggers and goes down on her knees, retching ink. Jake kneels to cradle her, desperate.

SINA
(disoriented)
I can see him ...

The church door opens behind them. Jake looks up –

The woman from the congregation, standing at the top of the steps. She looks desperately down at them, as though about to speak. Her husband appears behind her and grabs her arm roughly. She looks up at him and he shakes his head – no.

Jake remembers –

114 INT. PERENESE HOUSE – DAY – FLASHBACK

114

The bedroom door creaks open to reveal a photo of a young woman on the shelf behind the Pereneses' bed ... then the next photo, then the next ... and finally the last Perenese daughter.

115 EXT. CHURCH - NIGHT

115

Recognition hits Jake as the woman's husband pulls her back into the church and the doors slam shut behind them.

JAKE
I've seen her ...

CUT TO:

116 INT. PERENESE LIVING ROOM - DAY - FLASHBACK

116

Perenese stoops to lift the box of photographs. His shirt rides up to reveal his *pe'a*.

117 EXT. CHURCH - NIGHT 117

Sina raises her head. Jake looks at her, his eyes filled with hope.

JAKE
I know who the tattoo belongs to.

118 INT/EXT. JAKE'S CAR/PERENESE HOUSE - NIGHT 118

Jake stops the car. Sina looks up at Jake, flecks of black on her lips.

SINA
(weakly)
I'm scared.

JAKE
Lock the doors.

Jake climbs out of the car. Sina locks the doors behind him.

A rough neighbourhood by day, it's scarier by night. Music booms from a house further up the street. Dogs bark. A few doors up, NEIGHBOURS sit on the front lawn.

Jake walks up to the edge of Perenese's property and peers around the neighbours' fence. The house is dark. He scurries up the side of the house.

Around the back, Jake tries the back door. It opens.

119 INT. PERENESE HOUSE - NIGHT - CONTINUOUS 119

Jake creeps inside, through the kitchen and into the hallway. Dim light filters in from the street.

Jake pushes open the bedroom door. The photographs of the four young women on the shelf above the bed smile at him in the darkness.

Jake scans the room, then turns to the mirror. A white cloth hangs over it. Jake pulls it away ... to reveal his own reflection. He stares into the dark glass.

JAKE
Where are you?

Jake heads down the hallway, deeper into the house. He pushes open a door - a bathroom. The next door is locked.

(CONTINUED)

119 CONTINUED: 119

Jake stands back, considering ... then, POW! He kicks the door. The wood cracks and the door bangs open. The air around Jake seems to rush into the room as if into a vacuum.

120 INT. PERENESE HOUSE / BEDROOM - NIGHT 120

Jake crosses to the window and yanks opens the curtains. Street light washes in, illuminating -

A boy's room, with a teenage lifetime's accumulation - a rugby ball, toys, books and cassettes - all neatly arranged on the shelves and dresser, awaiting their owner's return.

Photos adorn the walls. A school portrait, a league team, a smiling teenager holding up a fish in one, in another wearing a suit with a teenage girl on his arm.

And a final photo. Jake lifts it from the wall. The Perenese family in front of the newly built church - Perenese, his wife, four daughters and his SON, standing at the edge of the frame. It's the same photo Sina found torn in the box of photos, but this one is complete.

The young man in the photos is THE TATTOOIST.

THUD! From elsewhere in the house. Jake freezes.

121 INT. JAKE'S CAR - NIGHT 121

BANG! The car rocks. Sina jumps. A wind seems to swirl around her. She looks around nervously. A shape moves in the reflective glass of the windows.

122 INT. PERENESE HOUSE / BEDROOM - NIGHT 122

Voices, the sound of the front door closing. Frantically, Jake looks around for a weapon.

123 INT. PERENESE HOUSE - NIGHT 123

Mr Perenese steps out of the light of the living room into the dark hallway. He calls over his shoulder:

PERENESE
(in Samoan)
*I don't want to eat. I'm not
hungry.*

(CONTINUED)

The old man stops in his tracks. Jake stands in the open doorway of the boy's room, a Samoan cricket bat in one hand, the photo still held in the other.

Perenese stares Jake down with the eyes of a man who has faced the worst life can deal him.

JAKE

What did you do to him?

PERENESE

I don't know what you're talking about.

JAKE

Your son.

PERENESE

We don't speak of him ... he brought shame on this house.

Mrs Perenese appears in the living room doorway. At the sight of Jake, she GASPS.

PERENESE (CONT'D)

Call the police.

JAKE

What did he do? Speak up to you in public? Skip church? What?

Perenese seems taken aback by Jake's fury.

PERENESE

He was a *pe'a-mutu*. He did not finish his *pe'a*. You happy now?

JAKE

And you killed him, you son of a bitch. You were so afraid of what people would think -

PERENESE

No!

Tears well in Perenese's eyes, his shoulders bowed with the shame.

JAKE

If you really cared about him, you'd've let him choose whether or not he got a *pe'a*.

(CONTINUED)

PERENESE

More than anything, he wanted to be a man! I say, he is too young. But he ask me ... he beg me to get the *pe'a*.

JAKE

If he wanted it so bad, then why the hell didn't he finish? Huh?

PERENESE

I don't know. Before he get the *pe'a*, I pass on to him the *ulalei* given to me my father, to give him the strength it gave to my family. He take it from me. I never see it, or him, again.

JAKE

I've seen him.

PERENESE

(hopeful)
Lomi? Where is he?

JAKE

I was hoping you could tell me.

PERENESE

Please ... I don't understand.

His confusion is genuine. Jake looks away, thinking hard.

JAKE

How did you find out he was gone?

PERENESE

He said he go to the *tufuga*, for the *pe'a*. But the *tufuga* never saw him on that day.

JAKE

Who was doing his *pe'a*?

BANG! The car jolts. Sina looks around wildly. Something moves in the wing mirror! She spins again - a dark shape shifts past the rearview mirror. It's inside the car.

CLICK - the car doors unlock in unison!

(CONTINUED)

Sina SCREAMS and lunges for the driver's door. She slams the locks back down. THUMP! Banging on the glass outside. Sina GASPS —

Jake is at the window.

JAKE

It's me!

Shaking, Sina unlocks the car and Jake gets in.

JAKE (CONT'D)

His name was Lomi Perenese. And I know who killed him.

Jake starts the car.

A vintage stylus rides a wave of warped vinyl as an old record spins. The music is the eerie Samoan song from the dream of the Tattooist, punctuated by the muffled crackle of needle on scratched 45.

Mr Va'a's church jacket hangs over the back of his chair. Beyond, Mr Va'a carries a white lace cloth and drapes it over the mirror in his living room.

BANGING on the front door. His eyes narrow warily.

Va'a opens the door ... and relaxes.

MR VA'A

(in Samoan)

Alipati, it's late.

Alipati fingers something in his hand. Va'a looks down:

The bone and wood tattooing tool is in his hands.

Va'a looks back up, wary once again.

ALIPATI

(in Samoan)

*When you handed down your tools,
what else did you pass to me?*

MR VA'A

(in Samoan)

Come in.

126 EXT. MR VA'A'S HOUSE - NIGHT

126

Jake's car pulls up outside Va'a's house. Jake opens the door for Sina and helps her up the side of the house. She moans in pain, stumbles.

SINA

You can't ... accuse my uncle of murder ... you need proof.

JAKE

We'll find it. We just gotta know where to look.

SINA

He used to ... work in his shed. Locked ever since.

The faintest TAP-TAP-TAP ... a ghostly memory.

JAKE

(to himself)

Right in front of my eyes.

Light spills out of the living room window onto the pathway ahead. The curtains are open. Jake risks a peep over the windowsill and gapes in surprise.

127 INT. LIVING ROOM - NIGHT

127

Inside, Alipati paces nervously as he speaks to Va'a in even tones. He indicates the tattooing tool that sits on the dining table. Va'a glares at him, eyes blazing.

128 EXT. MR VA'A'S HOUSE - NIGHT

128

Sina retches. Jake cringes and pulls her against him to muffle the sound as droplets of ink patter onto his chest.

A shadow falls across the pathway ahead. Above them, Mr Va'a looms at the window. He stands sentinel for what seems like an eternity. Below, Jake doesn't dare to breathe.

129 INT. LIVING ROOM - NIGHT

129

Mr Va'a stares out of the window. His own reflection on the glass comes into focus. He yanks the curtains closed.

130 EXT. GARDEN – NIGHT 130

Jake breathes a sigh of relief. Keeping low to the ground, he and Sina stumble towards the shed.

131 INT. LIVING ROOM - NIGHT 131

Mr Va'a turns from the window to where Alipati paces.

ALIPATI
(in Samoan)
*It's always bad luck for them to
get the pe'a alone!*

Alipati turns his back, head down as he gathers his thoughts. Immediately Va'a moves – lightning quick for a man of his size. He lifts a small table from beside his easy chair and smashes Alipati on the head. Alipati crumples.

The song ends as the needle runs into the groove at the end of the 45 ... lifts ... and returns to the beginning. The song starts again.

132 INT. SHED – NIGHT 132

The door scrapes open, sweeping a shaft of moonlight across old flax mats and dirt floor, a rake and shovel. A dirty mirror leans against one wall.

Jake lies Sina against the wall and kneels beside her. She is fading fast. The tattoo is spreading up her neck now towards her face.

He stands, looks around. On the wall, a familiar tapa cloth, faded with age but recognisable. Jake kneels, examines the flax mats, stained in patches.

JAKE
I've dreamed this place.

He pulls up the flax mats. The dirt beneath is packed hard, but uneven. He grabs the shovel.

CLANG! Jake brings the shovel down on the hard earth, dislodging a chunk of it. CLANG-CLANG! He hacks again, churning up the ground to reveal –

A dull, pale section of skull. Teeth protrude from its jawbone.

(CONTINUED)

SINA

Why?

Jake crouches and puts his arms around her.

JAKE

It's finished now – that's all that matters. Lomi's got nothing to be ashamed of.

Sina nestles her head against him and closes her eyes.

Jake looks up, to the dirty mirror against the wall. A glimpse of a dark shape standing over them –

CLANG! Sina's eyes flick open in shock. A massive spasm wracks her body. More lines of *pe'a* appear, snaking up her neck.

Alarmed, Jake turns back to Lomi's remains.

JAKE (CONT'D)

We know you didn't run! What more do you want?

He stares in anguish at the bones ... and sees something else in the dirt. He scrabbles frantically with his hands, unearthing a necklace of long whale teeth, a traditional Samoan *ulalei*. The one from the image in Mr Perenese's house.

JAKE (CONT'D)

It's not about his shame ... The shame is on his family.

The BANG of a door from outside. Jake spins, terrified. He looks out of the shed to see –

Head down, Mr Va'a drags Alipati across the garden by his hair.

JAKE

You're gonna need a bigger shed.

Va'a drops Alipati and glares at Jake. Before Jake can act, Va'a steps to the edge of the shed and lifts the machete from where it leans.

With surprising agility, Mr Va'a lunges. The machete whooshes through the air, glances off the iron wall as Jake sidesteps. He tackles Va'a, shoving him out into the garden.

134 INT. SHED - NIGHT 134

The Tattooist emerges from the shadows at the end of the shed, his eyes fixed on Sina.

135 EXT. GARDEN - NIGHT 135

Mr Va'a finds his feet, swings the machete sideways, backhanded, cracking Jake over the head. Jake reels and falls on the grass.

Va'a stands over him, swings the machete. Jake reaches for a piece of firewood, swings it up like a shield ... the machete whistles down - CHOCK! The blade sticks in the wood. Va'a rips the wood from Jake's hands and shakes it from the blade.

He swings again. Jake rolls - THUNK! The blade sinks deep into the ground. Mr Va'a leans down to grasp the machete with both hands.

Jake scrambles away and races towards the house.

136 INT. KITCHEN / LIVING ROOM - NIGHT 136

Jake slams the kitchen door shut. He locks it - SMASH! The machete smashes through the glass. Mr Va'a reaches inside clawing for the lock.

Jake scrambles into the living room, looking for ...

The phone! He snatches up the receiver, reaches for the buttons as - SMASH! The machete cleaves the plastic in two.

Jake jumps clear, picks up one of the dining chairs - SMASH! A blow from the machete shatters it, leaving Jake with a piece of wood.

MR VA'A

Didn't anyone ever tell you not to
fuck with an islander with a
machete?

Mr Va'a swings - THUNK! The blade lodges in the dining table. Jake grabs Mr Va'a in a rugby tackle, slamming him against the wall.

VVVVVVIP! The needle scrapes off the 45 as the record player crashes to the floor.

- 137 EXT. GARDEN - NIGHT 137
 Alipati stirs. He picks himself up, groaning. Blood runs down the side of his face. He shakes his head and gets unsteadily to his feet.
- 138 INT. SHED - NIGHT 138
 Sina looks up as the spirit stands over her. His eyes blaze with malice. Weakly, she crawls towards the shed door. The Tattooist raises his hammer - TAP-TAP-CLANG! Sina cries out in agony.
 A shadow fills the doorway - Alipati. His eyes move from Sina to the excavated grave.
- ALIPATI
 Sina?
- Sina holds something out to Alipati in a shaking hand.
- SINA
 Perenese ... take this to Mr Perenese.
- 139 INT. KITCHEN / LIVING ROOM - NIGHT 139
 Jake slams Mr Va'a against the wall.
- JAKE
 You're a murderer!
- MR VA'A
 No!
- 140 INT. SHED - NIGHT 140
 A brief FLASH of the dream images ... flesh festers and weeps ... Lomi's fist clenches in pain.
- MR VA'A (V.O.)
 His *pe'a* was infected.
- 141 INT. LIVING ROOM - NIGHT 141
 Jake glares at Va'a.

(CONTINUED)

JAKE

He could have been saved ... there
are doctors -

MR VA'A

Like you, they would not have
understood.

Va'a shoves Jake back across the room. He advances, wrenching
the machete from the table.

JAKE

So you killed him and said he ran
away - you brought shame on the
Pereneses instead of on yourself.

142 INT. SHED - NIGHT

142

Lomi gasps in agony on the flax mats. The dark shadow of Mr
Va'a stands over him, the machete raised. The blade falls -
CHOCK!

143 INT. LIVING ROOM - NIGHT

143

Jake presses up against the wall as Va'a approaches,
menacing.

MR VA'A

He got sick because his spirit was
weak! It was a mercy, to kill him.

JAKE

What about Sina and Alipati,
Victoria, Luke ... their blood's on
your hands too! It's you who should
be ashamed!

MR VA'A

I would rather DIE than live in
shame!

Va'a throws Jake back into the sideboard, grabs him by the
throat with a meaty fist and raises the machete. He swings -

THUNK! The blade is buried in the wall.

As Mr Va'a wrenches the machete free, Jake scans the room for
a weapon. His eyes alight on the tool on the table Alipati
brought with him. Jake grabs the tool and runs for the door.

144 EXT. PERENESE HOUSE - NIGHT 144

Alipati bangs on Mr Perenese's door, out of breath.

From inside, the sound of approaching footsteps. The door opens, and Mr Perenese stares out at Alipati.

PERENESE

What do you want?

Alipati holds something out to Mr Perenese. He looks down at it, his eyes filling with tears ... The whalebone necklace, Lomi's *ulalei*.

145 EXT. GARDEN - NIGHT 145

Jake races out of the house, crossing the garden to the shed.

JAKE

Sina!

146 INT. SHED - NIGHT 146

Jake bursts into the shed and looks around wildly. Signs of a struggle ... patches of black ink, splatters and a trail, leading to a dark corner. Jake steps closer. Sina huddles there, her breath ragged and erratic.

JAKE

Sina ..?

CLANG! Jake turns towards the sound: the mirror. A glimpse of the Tattooist straddling her, his tools falling with cataclysmic force. She flinches with the might of each blow.

JAKE (CONT'D)

(roars)

LEAVE HER ALONE!

VA'A (O.S.)

Let her go, boy. It is a mercy.

Jake spins to see Va'a standing in the doorway, the machete in his hand. He is covered in blood, dirt and sweat. He looks like he's at the end of the line.

JAKE

Never.

Va'a nods, like he expected this. He hefts the machete.

(CONTINUED)

VA'A

Then get used to this place. You're gonna be here for a long time.

Va'a raises the machete, lunges, as –

Jake steps aside and plunges the tattooing tool into Va'a's neck!

Mr Va'a ROARS in pain and stumbles back. He wrenches the tool from his neck. It squirts blood, then a plume of black ink that slows to a trickle. Mr Va'a looks blankly at Jake ... then sneers.

MR VA'A

I wear the *pe'a* boy. One little prick ain't gonna hurt me.

JAKE

Wait'll you see what this little prick can do.

Va'a scoffs ... then looks past Jake to the shadows.

Glaring from between light and dark is THE TATOOIST, the fury that has kept him from peace burning in his eyes. Va'a's face goes slack with terror. He looks to the tool in his hand, then to Jake, realising what Jake's done.

Wind sighs through the walls, under the roof. The strumming of the guitar, the lilting song.

Va'a backs away, stumbles into Lomi's grave and falls. He whimpers in fear.

Jake gathers Sina in his arms.

CLANG! Mr Va'a jolts. Blood blooms on his T-shirt. Va'a rips off his T-shirt to expose his torso – streaked with blood. A fresh line of *tatau* extends from his *pe'a*.

Va'a looks to Jake in absolute horror. In the mirror, another horrifying glimpse of the tattooist, standing over Va'a, hammering brutally ...

Va'a moans in panic, thrashes in pain. Then he freezes as he looks past Jake ... to where Mr Perenese stands in the doorway, Alipati behind him. Perenese holds the *ulalei* in shaking hands.

Jake looks to the mirror – the Tattooist looks up from Va'a, his eyes burning with rage. Held aloft ready for another blow, his tools drip ink and blood.

(CONTINUED)

Seeing the grave, Mr Perenese approaches slowly. Tears run down his cheeks. Jake watches, moved by the old man's emotion.

Va'a begins to crawl weakly away into the shadows.

Perenese goes down on one knee at the edge of the grave. He looks up at Jake mournfully.

PERENESE

For my shame, I'm sorry. If I was hard on him, it was only because I loved him so much ... my son.

JAKE

I understand that now.

Mr Perenese holds out the *ulalei*. In the mirror, a flicker of The Tattooist, crouching in the grave. The *ulalei* falls through the apparition to grace Lomi's bones once more. The wind seems to sigh through the structure of the shed, as though relieving it of some great burden ... then silence.

A thick COUGHING from the corner ... Va'a. Mr Perenese turns, strides over, stands over Mr Va'a.

Slowly, emphatically, Mr Perenese unbuttons his shirt to revealing his spectacular *pe'a*. Then he bends, picks up the machete. Va'a cowers as Mr Perenese raises the weapon, his eyes burning with rage -

JAKE (CONT'D)

Wait.

Perenese turns, aghast at Jake's intervention.

PERENESE

You know nothing of this.

JAKE

He needs to pay for what he did ...

PERENESE

(nods)

As he must - with his life.

JAKE

He said he'd rather die, than live in shame.

Perenese thinks about his, his eyes never leaving Va'a.

(CONTINUED)

PERENESE

There'll be no mercy for him.

At last, Perenese allows the point of the machete to rest in the dirt. Alipati stands beside him, looking down at Mr Va'a in disgust.

ALIPATI

There's another price he can pay.

MR VA'A

(humble)

What do you ask of me, *tufuga*?

Mr Perenese holds the machete out to Va'a – take it. Va'a's eyes widen in fear, realising what it is that Perenese wants. He grasps the machete with a trembling hand.

Jake's eyes widen in horror as OFFSCREEN, Va'a gives a thick, ugly MOAN. Jake turns away.

He crosses to Sina and lifts her in his arms. As the sounds of Va'a's penance continue, he steps out of the shed and disappears into the darkness.

FADE TO BLACK

The sound of SAMOAN VOICES united in song – a FUNERAL HYMN.

FADE IN:

147 EXT/INT. CEMETERY/PERENESE HOUSE/JAKE'S APARTMENT – DAY 147

The song continues over a series of INTERCUT IMAGES:

The sun breaks through the clouds above –

The CHURCH CEMETERY. A large crowd of MOURNERS stands around an unseen grave, SINGING in unison.

THE PERENESE HOUSE – cars, vans, utes pull up outside. Mrs Perenese steps out onto the front doorstep, confused ... then breaks into a tearful smile.

JAKE'S HAND caresses Sina's back, the tattoo he gave her, the chaotic marks of Lomi's *pe'a*, now healed into rigid scars.

ON THE PERENESE PATHWAY, members of the community make their way towards the house, their expressions conciliatory. One by one, they hug Mrs Perenese.

(CONTINUED)

JAKE'S NEEDLE BUZZES, joining the broken lines of *tatau*, adding colour, definition, beauty. Sina lies face down. Jake leans to whisper.

JAKE
Does it hurt?

SINA
(shakes her head, smiles)
Not anymore.

THE GRAFFITI on the fence is painted around, coloured, incorporated into a Pacific mural, beautified ... The broken window pane is replaced ...

JAKE TATTOOS across Sina's belly – an image wholly original now – beautiful, vibrant, a tattoo of life.

IN THE GARDEN, kids play while others rally around the Pereneses. Mrs Perenese sits in a garden chair, her dress brightly coloured, her smile wide.

THE CEMETERY, where the mourners make their way towards the church.

THE TATTOO completed, Sina smiles up at Jake. He puts his arms around her, kisses her, the images of their tattoos seeming to merge into a whole.

Fading in, the sound of a RINGING TONE ...

Jake sits on the edge of his bed, the phone to his ear, waiting as the phone on the other end continues to ring. Finally, a click as the connection is made.

FATHER (V.O.)
(on phone)
Hello?

JAKE
Hey, Dad ... it's me.

Tears in his eyes, Jake smiles as we ...

FADE TO BLACK

FADE IN:

149 EXT. MR VA'A'S HOUSE - DAY 149

A grey South Auckland day. A van pulls up, HOMECARE written on the side. A middle-aged white woman steps out - a HOMECARE VOLUNTEER. She takes a plastic covered tray from the back of the van and heads towards -

Mr Va'a's house, now fallen into disrepair. The garden is wild and overgrown. Where the shed once was, there is a naked pit containing rubbish and garden waste.

The Volunteer heads up the driveway towards the back door.

150 INT. MR VA'A'S HOUSE - DAY 150

Moving slowly through the house. The silence is oppressive. The sound of a key in the lock, then the Volunteer lets herself in.

VOLUNTEER
(calls cheerily)
Mr Va'a? Homecare!

No response. She steps tentatively inside and creeps down the hallway.

The further into the house she steps, the more crept out the volunteer looks. Curtains are drawn. Objects, clothes, empty plates lie strewn. Flies buzz.

She steps into the LIVING ROOM, looks around and GASPS -

Mr Va'a's chair is a dark shape at the end of the room.

Rattled, the Volunteer approaches slowly.

VOLUNTEER (CONT'D)
Mr Va'a, my name's Rachel ... I
have your lunch for you.

Va'a's fists clench and unclench on the arms of his chair. A low insane CACKLE. Trying to ignore him, the Volunteer busies herself, unpacking his lunch.

Va'a pounds the arm of the chair in frustration. We glimpse powerful arms covered in raised scarring.

MR VA'A
The shame ...

(CONTINUED)

VOLUNTEER

Now Mr Va'a, you'll need to calm
down before you can -

She turns to him with his lunch, sees him and GASPS despite
herself -

We push in to find him now:

Below the chest, his body is a contoured mass of scar tissue
where his *pe'a* has been cut from his body. A jagged landscape
of pain, carved and sutured, pitted by the removal of deep
chunks of flesh, in other places flayed and then grafted
over.

MR VA'A

... the shame!

On this ruin of a man, we ...

FADE OUT