

COMMANDER AUSTRALIA

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and

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FADE IN:

EXT. JAKE'S HOUSE - NIGHT

Legend: 1972

Millions of stars twinkle in a moonless sky.

In the front yard of a suburban house, JAKE HOLDEN (21) peers through a telescope. He's tall and thin with brown-hair and dressed casually. So far there's nothing extraordinary about this kid.

Standing next to Jake is his girlfriend, LINDA KINNEAR (21). She's beautiful without even trying. She nurses a glass of wine and stares at the sky.

LINDA
A shooting star!

In the sky, we see a short-lived streak of bright light.

JAKE
Actually it's a meteor burning up
in the atmosphere.

LINDA
Party-pooper. What if I want to
wish on a shooting star?

Jake smiles and slips an arm around her waist. In his other hand, he holds a stubby of beer.

JAKE
Wish away. Meteors grant wishes
too.

LINDA
Now you're being silly.

Jake's smile disappears as he sees...

...a Ford Fairlane pull up in front of the house and a man climb out. FRED HOLDEN (56), is a politician, dressed in an expensive suit, shirt, and tie. He wears black-rimmed glasses. His shoes are polished. To Fred, appearances are everything (hopefully preventing anyone from digging below the surface).

The front gate clinks as Fred enters. Jake tenses, and takes a slug of his beer. Dutch courage to face his father. Linda tries to ignore the change in atmosphere.

LINDA (CONT'D)
Hi, Mr. Holden.

FRED
Star-gazing, Jake? Next, you'll be
telling fortunes.

Linda sips her wine, pretending that the snub didn't hurt.
Jake's arm tightens around her waist. He'd do more if he had
the balls to stand up to his dad.

JAKE
Astronomy, Dad, not astrology.

FRED
Where's Gemini?

Jake can't answer. If he does, Fred wins. Fred always wins.
Jake adjusts the optical tube in an attempt to keep his cool.
Fred gestures to the telescope.

FRED (CONT'D)
Your grandmother shouldn't have
bought you this. Waste of money.
Waste of time. Won't lead to
anything.

JAKE
It's what I want to do.

FRED
Well, that's a problem. See, your
work experience fell through. Lucky
for you, I know the right people
and could wangle a favour.

Jake stares at Fred, horrified. This is not a favour. This is
an ambush.

FRED (CONT'D)
You'll be working with me in my
Electoral Office.

JAKE
Dad--

FRED
(interrupting)
Thanks isn't necessary. You're my
son. Just make me proud.

Fred walks away. Jake stares after him, stunned. What just
happened?

INT. JAKE'S HOUSE - KITCHEN - NIGHT

The house is a bachelor pad come environmental campaign office. Jake and Linda sit at a table with Jake's roommate and best mate, DANNY JOHNSON (21), long hair, beard, vegetarian, works for Greenpeace. Jake drinks heavily, drowning his sorrows.

DANNY

Wow, that sucks, mate.

(beat)

You reckon your dad planned this?

Jake shoots Danny a look -- do bears shit in the woods? Danny shakes his head. Unbelievable!

LINDA

Can't you say no? Find something else yourself?

Jake laughs humorlessly.

DANNY

His dad's got a hearing problem. He can't hear the word "no".

LINDA

You could work at Greenpeace, couldn't you? Danny--

Jake and Danny erupt with laughter, drowning out anything else Linda might say.

DANNY

Oh, imagine you--

Danny can't finish the sentence. The idea is just too funny, at least for him and Jake. Linda watches on, bemused.

Suddenly Danny's mirth disappears.

DANNY (CONT'D)

Hey! Why the hell not?

Jake's still laughing.

DANNY (CONT'D)

Think about it? What's worse than astronomy?

JAKE

You serious?

Danny nods seriously.

JAKE (CONT'D)

Shit!

(beat)

Let's do it.

Who are they kidding? They're never going to do this, and they both know why.

INT. JAKE'S HOUSE - LIVING ROOM - NIGHT

A movie plays on TV. Linda watches while Jake drifts in and out of an alcohol-induced sleep.

Linda gently shakes him. He regains consciousness.

LINDA

I have to go.

JAKE

Stay.

LINDA

I can't. I'm house-sitting for my sister. Remember? Her dog--

JAKE

One night won't hurt.

Jake kisses her neck. Much as she likes it, she reluctantly prizes him off and stands. Jake gets the hint.

JAKE (CONT'D)

I'll drive.

LINDA

I can walk.

Jake shakes his head. He's more alert but still too drunk to drive. He stands.

JAKE

Isn't safe.

EXT. HOLDEN TORANA - PARKED - NIGHT

Linda helps Jake to a car parked in the driveway. Jake sways drunkenly. His hand clutches at thin air.

JAKE

(slurred)

My beer?

Linda opens the passenger door and eases Jake into the passenger seat. He frowns at the dashboard.

JAKE (CONT'D)
Where's the steering wheel?

He turns his head to the driver's side.

JAKE (CONT'D)
What's it doing there?

LINDA
You promised to let me drive.

JAKE
Did I? Was I drunk?

EXT. SUBURBAN STREET - NIGHT

Street lights illuminate an almost deserted street. Only the night owls prowl. The Torana comes into view. "You're All Woman" by Sherbet plays...

INT. HOLDEN TORANA - DRIVING - NIGHT

...on the radio. Jake is passed out in the passenger seat.

Linda peers down at the gears, struggling to find top gear in the unfamiliar car.

Glancing back to the windscreen, she's blinded by bright headlights coming straight at them. Horror flickers across her face.

INT. HOSPITAL EMERGENCY DEPARTMENT - NIGHT

MEDICAL STAFF rush a gurney down a corridor. On the gurney, clinging to life is Jake. His face is blood-splattered, his mouth and nose covered by an oxygen mask.

INT. HOSPITAL OPERATING ROOM - NIGHT

Beep, beep, beep of a heart rate monitor. Bright overhead lights. Masked medical staff performing surgery. Jake hanging on by a thread.

INT. HOSPITAL ICU - NIGHT

An unconscious Jake is in recovery. Brown hair sticks out from a bandage covering most of his head. He's pale but alive according to the constant beep, beep, beep of the heart rate monitor.

INT. MORGUE - NIGHT

Linda's body lies on a metal table with only her head exposed, the rest of her body covered by a sheet. Her hair is matted with blood, her beautiful face marred by cuts.

INT. JAKE'S HOUSE - BEDROOM - DAY

Legend: 3 Months Later

A bachelor's messy bedroom. Jake lays in bed, sleeping erratically. His hair is longer and he's unshaven -- he's let himself go since the accident.

EXT. HOLDEN TORANA - NIGHT - DREAM SEQUENCE

The Torana is wrapped around a pole. A write-off.

EXT. JAKE'S HOUSE - NIGHT - DREAM SEQUENCE

Linda's smiling face, alive and beautiful.

LINDA

Jake.

INT. JAKE'S HOUSE - BEDROOM - DAY - END DREAM SEQUENCE

Jake wakes, breathing heavily, disturbed by the traumatic memories. He winces, clearly hung-over. On a bedside cupboard is an empty bottle of whiskey.

He tosses the sheets aside and hops out of bed, dressed only in boxer shorts. His body is scarred from the accident.

INT. JAKE'S HOUSE - KITCHEN - DAY

Dressed in a T-shirt and boxer shorts, Jake helps himself to a cup of freshly brewed coffee from a pot made by Danny.

Danny sits at the table eating beans on toast and reading the newspaper. Jake plants himself in the opposite chair to drink his coffee.

DANNY
You see this?

Danny slides the newspaper across the table and points to an article. Jake reads the headline.

JAKE
"NASA Warning: Asteroid Headed for Earth." Great. The end of the world's coming.

DANNY
You should be so lucky. Keep reading.

Jake ignores the newspaper.

DANNY (CONT'D)
Man, this is your dream.

Jake pushes the newspaper away. His dreams are long gone.

DANNY (CONT'D)
I'll come with you.

JAKE
I'm going back to bed. And I don't need company.

DANNY
Come on, Jake. This is too good to miss.

Jake stands, about to leave...

DANNY (CONT'D)
(remembering)
Your dad dropped in last night. I told him you were out.

Jake turns back to Danny.

JAKE
What'd he want?

DANNY
To see how you're doing and let you know your gran isn't well.

Jake's face cracks with worry.

JAKE

What's wrong?

DANNY

You think he'd tell me? If it helps, he didn't seem worried. Until I got in his face about nukes. You really want to yank his chain come to our rally today.

The invitation falls on deaf ears. Danny throws the newspaper at Jake.

DANNY (CONT'D)

The meteor's expected to land near Warnertown, not far from your gran.

He holds his hands up innocently.

DANNY (CONT'D)

Just saying.

JAKE

Enjoy your protest.

DANNY

You too.

INT. JAKE'S HOUSE - HALLWAY - DAY

Danny is outside Jake's bedroom, holding a placard in each hand. On the placards, big bold letters scream "GET OUT OF BED" and "LIVE YOUR LIFE". Danny chants the same words as he paces back and forth, protest-style, in front of Jake's door.

DANNY

Get out of bed! Live your life! Get out of bed! Live your life!

The door opens. Jake stares at Danny as if he's...

JAKE

Crazy bastard!

DANNY

Takes one to know one.

JAKE

How long you going to do this?

DANNY

How long will it take?

INT. JAKE'S HOUSE - BEDROOM - DAY

Jake lays in bed with a pillow shoved over his head, trying to block out the sound of Danny's loud chanting coming from the hallway.

Irritated, Jake throws the pillow at the door.

INT. JAKE'S HOUSE - KITCHEN - DAY

Jake sits at the table, drinking coffee and reading the article about the meteor. He's showered, shaved, and dressed in clean clothes -- a miracle in itself.

Danny enters and feigns shock.

DANNY

Who the hell are you?

JAKE

Someone looking for a new house mate.

Danny peers over Jake's shoulder to see what he's reading. The meteor. Victory!

DANNY

Good luck finding someone who'll put up with your sorry arse.
(looking around)
You seen my keys?

JAKE

They on your head?

DANNY

Keys, mate. Not sunglasses.

Danny checks under the table, on the kitchen bench, and in a drawer. No luck. He wanders into the next room.

Jake pushes the newspaper aside. After a moment of uncertainty, he rises, walks to the wall phone, and dials a number.

JAKE

(into phone)
Hi Gran. What's wrong?

INT. ABANDONED WAREHOUSE - DAY

This dingy place is not where you'd expect to find...

...Fred Holden in his expensive suit, shirt, and tie.

Doing business? He's meeting with two thugs, HARRY AND LARRY (30s). He hands Harry a set of keys.

FRED
You were never there, right?

HARRY
Never there.

LARRY
Where, boss?

Fred smiles.

FRED
And you don't know me.

LARRY
Who, boss?

EXT. JAKE'S CAR - PARKED - DAY

Jake stands at the rear of a new Datsun 180B. He loads his telescope and an overnight bag into the boot.

As he closes the boot, we see a "SAY NO TO NUKES" sticker on the rear window.

EXT. CITY STREET - DAY

A banner. Much larger than the sticker with a hand painted message: NO TO NUCLEAR.

Holding the banner is Danny and fellow PROTESTERS. A CROWD of protesters march along the street, chanting...

CROWD
No to nuclear. No to nuclear.

Fred Holden stands on the footpath, frowning as he watches the protest. Next to him is the Police Commissioner WARREN SOUTHALL (61), who looks like the most dangerous thing he could catch is a cold.

FRED
Arrest them all, Warren.

POLICE COMMISSIONER
We can't do that, Fred.

FRED
They're a menace.

As the crowd passes, Fred glares at them.

Danny sees him...

DANNY
Hey, Fred, watch out for nuclear
fallout.

...and launches a tomato that lands near Fred's feet,
splattering tomato guts over his polished shoes and trouser
cuffs.

FRED
You'll regret that, son. And that's
a promise.

Danny laughs.

DANNY
You're a politician. Your promises
mean squat.

EXT. JAKE'S DATSUN 180B - DRIVING - DAY

-- Jake's Datsun drives along National Highway A1. The skies
are blue. Farming land stretches in all directions from the
highway to the horizon.

-- Jake's Datsun follows the undulating highway. At the top
of a rise, to the left, a country town is visible in the
distance. A smelter stack reaches into the sky, towering
above the town. This is Port Pirie.

-- Jake's Datsun passes a sign: "Welcome to Port Pirie."

EXT. ALISON'S HOUSE - DAY

Jake's Datsun pulls up in front of an old painted sandstone
villa with a small fenced-in front yard.

Jake grabs his overnight bag from the boot and locks the car.

ALISON HOLDEN (78) hurries to meet him. She has short grey
hair and glasses, and no intention of leaving this planet
until she's 100.

JAKE
Hi Gran.

She hugs him, then steps back to look at him.

ALISON
It's so good to see you.

She points to the car window with the SAY NO TO NUKES sticker.

ALISON (CONT'D)
Your father seen that.

JAKE
Not yet.

They both know that Fred won't like it.

ALISON
You hungry?

INT. ALISON'S HOUSE - KITCHEN - DAY

Alison makes a pot of tea. Jake tries to help her.

JAKE
Let me do that, Gran.

She waves him away.

ALISON
Go. Sit. I'm fine.

JAKE
Gran--

ALISON
I'm old and I intend to get older.
Don't worry. Now, tell me about
this meteor.

INT. ALISON'S HOUSE - KITCHEN - LATER

Jake and Alison sit at the table, drinking tea from Alison's best china. Two plates of homemade cupcakes and biscuits are positioned in front of Jake. He helps himself to a cupcake.

JAKE
Gran, how many meteors do you think
enter the atmosphere each year?

ALISON
I don't know. Hundreds.

JAKE

Thousands.

ALISON

Really? I had no idea.

JAKE

Most people don't because the meteors are burned up on the way to Earth. That's when we see a shooting star...

EXT. JAKE'S HOUSE - NIGHT - FLASHBACK

Linda nurses a glass of wine and stares at the sky.

LINDA

What if I want to wish on a shooting star?

INT. ALISON'S HOUSE - KITCHEN - DAY - PRESENT

Jake looks haunted. Alison's voice snaps him back to the moment.

ALISON

You're such a clever boy.

She smiles with pride.

ALISON (CONT'D)

Your grandfather would be so proud. He always was, that's why he called you Commander. A big honour in your grandfather's eyes. Do you still have his medals?

Jake nods, smiling fondly at this memory.

JAKE

I'll never part with them, Gran.

ALISON

Good boy. Go on, help yourself to a biscuit. Now, what were you saying?

Jake takes a biscuit.

JAKE

Um, meteors rarely hit Earth but this one is heading straight for us.

ALISON

That doesn't sound good. Will you be safe?

Again, Jake looks haunted.

ALISON (CONT'D)

You keep thinking of her, don't you?

An answer is unnecessary.

ALISON (CONT'D)

You can't blame yourself, Jake.

JAKE

Who else is there?

ALISON

No one. That's why it's called an accident.

JAKE

I wish I could make it right.

ALISON

Well, don't stop there. What about war, famine, poverty?

JAKE

You sound like Danny.

ALISON

Good. That boy has spunk.

EXT. GREENPEACE OFFICE - FRONT - NIGHT

A small, cheap office with a sign GREENPEACE displayed in the front window. All is dark and quiet.

EXT. GREENPEACE OFFICE - REAR - NIGHT

The rear of the office overlooks a tiny backyard full of pot plants. Someone has tried to convert this shabby space into a piece of paradise.

Harry and Larry climb over the fence. Harry has a canvas bag strapped to him. He lands easily. Larry isn't as adept, landing in a pot plant, toppling it and himself. Off screen a dog barks.

Harry glares at Larry.

HARRY
 (whispers)
 We were never here.

Larry straightens the pot plant. Harry walks to the back door and opens it with the key. He turns to Larry.

HARRY (CONT'D)
 Keep a lookout.

INT. GREENPEACE OFFICE - NIGHT

A torch strobos a small office crammed with desks, chairs, filing cabinets, cork boards, posters, etc. The beam rests on a filing cabinet.

Harry retrieves a file from his canvas bag, then opens the top drawer of a filing cabinet. He finds a space at the back of the cabinet and inserts the file. He smiles as he closes the drawer.

HARRY
 Protest that!

INT. ALISON'S HOUSE - SPARE BEDROOM - NIGHT

Jake enters, freshly showered, a towel wrapped around his waist. Off screen a telephone rings. Ignoring it, Jake reaches into his bag for clean boxer shorts and a T-shirt. He closes his bedroom door.

INT. ALISON'S HOUSE - HALLWAY - NIGHT

Alison knocks on Jake's bedroom door.

ALISON
 Phone, Jake. Your father.

INT. FRED'S OFFICE - NIGHT

A telephone receiver is jammed to Fred's ear. He sits at a desk in his home. This room is practical, for work only. He's livid, shouting into the telephone.

FRED
 Protesting against advancement,
 throwing tomatoes, I've never
 witnessed such stupidity. I don't
 want you living with him. I don't
 want you associating with him.
 (MORE)

FRED (CONT'D)

It's time you did something useful.
I'm not going to stand by and let
you waste your life...

INT. ALISON'S HOUSE - LIVING ROOM - NIGHT

Jake hangs up the receiver. The telephone sits on a small table beside his chair. He stares into space, shell-shocked.

Behind him, hanging on the wall, is an old photograph of a handsome man dressed in a Navy uniform, medals pinned to his chest. This is Jake's grandfather, Stanley Holden.

Alison enters, looking at Jake with concern.

ALISON

Is everything okay?

Jake continues to stare into space, as if not registering. Alison sits in the chair next to him.

ALISON (CONT'D)

Jake?

A beat.

JAKE

Dad's not paying for me to be a lay-about anymore.

ALISON

You're not a lay-about.

JAKE

He wants me to move home and get a job. Apparently I let other people fight my battles until they give up on me.

ALISON

That's ridiculous. What brought this on?

JAKE

I think the boy with the spunk threw a tomato at Dad today.

(off Alison's confused look)

Danny was protesting.

Alison pats his hand.

ALISON
Let me speak to Fred.

Jake smiles weakly.

JAKE
I guess the message is always the
same.
(impersonating Fred)
Be more like me, son.

EXT. OCEAN HARBOUR - NIGHT

An oil tanker sits in a harbour. All is quiet. There's no sign of any crew.

Water near the tanker ripples, disturbed, then two divers appear. Their identities are concealed by wet suits and diving gear. They secure plastic-wrapped explosives to the hull, near the engine room of the tanker.

One of the divers sets a timer attached to the explosives. The timer counts down: 60:00...59:59...59:58... 59:57...

EXT. MOTOR BOAT - NIGHT

A motor boat is anchored a safe distance from the oil tanker. The motor boat appears to be empty, waiting for...

...two divers to climb on board.

Once seated, the divers remove their masks to expose Harry and Larry.

A shape emerges from the rear of the boat. Fred's face is revealed by moonlight.

FRED
Well?

HARRY
Mission accomplished, boss.

LARRY
What mission? We were never here.

INT. ALISON'S HOUSE - SPARE BEDROOM - NIGHT

Jake lays awake in bed. He tosses and turns, having trouble sleeping.

Through the window we see the moon shining brightly.

EXT. OCEAN HARBOUR - NIGHT

A bright moon shines above...

...the oil tanker. All is quiet.

On the side of the tanker, the timer counts down: 00:03...
00:02...00:01...00:00...

...a massive explosion rocks the tanker. Metal flies through the air like missiles. The tanker quickly becomes a fireball.

Oil leaks into the ocean. Flames follow. The ocean is on fire.

Thick black plumes of smoke rise from the oil tanker and the surrounding water.

The tanker lists to the side as it takes on water.

INT. FRED'S OFFICE - NIGHT

Fred sits at his desk, drinking whiskey. He glances at his watch. Then he picks up the telephone and dials triple 0.

FRED
(into phone)
Police.
(fake urgency)
Greenpeace did it. Blew up the oil
tanker in protest. Danny. He told
me. He did it. Works for
Greenpeace. Been planning--

He abruptly hangs up, smiling with sadistic satisfaction.

INT. ALISON'S HOUSE - KITCHEN - DAY

Alison has made Jake a full breakfast of bacon, eggs, tomato, mushrooms, and toast. He tucks in hungrily.

JAKE
This is great. Thanks, Gran.

Alison runs water into the sink and adds detergent in preparation for washing the dirty dishes. She looks at Jake while she works.

ALISON

I made you sandwiches and a thermos of tea to take with you.

JAKE

Thanks, Gran. You think of everything.

She wipes the top of the bench with a dish cloth, still looking at Jake.

ALISON

Enjoy your meteor. Don't worry about your father.

Alison winces, clutches her chest, suddenly pale.

Jake drops his utensils, worried.

JAKE

Gran?

He rushes to her. She waves his concern away.

ALISON

Just a little pain. Indigestion.

JAKE

You've been working too hard. You need to rest.

He leads her to the table and helps her into a chair.

ALISON

I'm fine. Your breakfast is going cold.

Jake sits next to her.

JAKE

When did you last see a doctor?

ALISON

Oh, I don't know. When you were ten.

Jake is incredulous. Seriously?

ALISON (CONT'D)

I look after myself. I do a better job than any doctor.

JAKE

I should stay--

ALISON
 Nonsense. You can call in after
 your meteor.
 (smiles, remembering)
 You wanted to be an astronaut. It's
 not too late.

JAKE
 I was nine, Gran. You need me here.

ALISON
 If I need you I'll call the
 Millers.

INT. JAKE'S HOUSE - KITCHEN - DAY

Danny sits at the kitchen table eating beans on toast and
 drinking coffee.

The telephone rings. Danny answers.

DANNY
 (into phone)
 Hello.

Danny's eyes widen, incredulous.

DANNY (CONT'D)
 (into phone)
 No! Where?

Off screen he hears sirens, lots of them, coming this way.
 Something big must be up.

DANNY (CONT'D)
 (into phone)
 Hang on.

Curious, he deposits the receiver on the bench and hurries
 to...

INT. JAKE'S HOUSE - LIVING ROOM - DAY

...the front window. Danny opens the curtains a fraction and
 peeks outside just as six police cars pull up in front of the
 house. His eyes widen. Holy shit!

EXT. JAKE'S DATSUN 180B - DRIVING - DAY

--Jake's Datsun drives along a country road lined with gum
 trees.

--Farmland reaches to the base of the majestic Flinders Ranges, where Jake's heading.

INT. ALISON'S HOUSE - LIVING ROOM - DAY

Alison sits in a chair, clutching her chest. She's in pain. This is serious and she knows it. Behind her is the photograph of her husband Stanley.

Alison reaches for the telephone and dials triple 0. Her breathing is laboured, painful, making speech more difficult.

ALISON
 (into phone)
 Ambulance.
 (beat)
 128 Golf Course Road. Please hurry.

She presses the plunger to hang up and dials another number.

ALISON (CONT'D)
 (into phone)
 Fred, I might be having a heart
 attack.

She leans back in the chair, clutching the receiver. She's in a bad way.

ALISON (CONT'D)
 Oh my.

EXT. WARNERTOWN FARMHOUSE - DAY

Jake's Datsun 180B pulls up outside a circa 1900 sandstone farmhouse surrounded by a bullnose verandah. A painted galvanised iron fence encloses a garden of native trees and shrubs.

Jake hops out of the car just as...

...SHARON MILLER (10) flings open the back door and runs to meet him. She has long brown pigtails and her face is sun kissed (freckles).

SHARON
 Are you Jake? I'm Sharon.

JAKE
 Hi Sharon. Yes, I'm Jake.

She grabs his hand and leads him to an old shed.