

VERMIN

By

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EXT. JONES FARM - NIGHT

Legend: Inspired by true events.

A full moon looms over the Flinders Ranges - big, bright, casting silver light over the dry land.

At the base of the hills, paddocks of crop stubble stretch wide. A dry creek snakes through, choked with the last patch of native scrub on the property.

A RABBIT, fur the colour of dust, sniffs at sparse vegetation. It freezes mid-chew, a blade of grass still protruding from its mouth. Ears flatten against its skull. Something's wrong.

A SPOTLIGHT BLASTS through the darkness. Artificial. Unnatural.

The rabbit is locked in the beam - eyes reflecting white fire, body rigid as death. A heartbeat of perfect stillness.

BOOM! A GUNSHOT.

The rabbit vanishes.

More spotlights sweep the scrub - blinding, searching. Shadows lurch as another rabbit flees.

Another GUNSHOT.

EXT. LOCK PROPERTY - NIGHT

A BEAT-UP UTE tears down a dirt road, engine ROARING like a gut-shot beast. Chrome bullbar dented, windscreen spider-webbed from some previous impact.

Inside the cab - three vague shapes, young, reckless. The dashboard flickers between beer glinting, grinning teeth, wild eyes.

Spotlights slash across the landscape - steady beams cutting through the dark. Then - the lights JOLT into a STROBE - erratic, hunting, pulsing like a heartbeat.

Flashes of an old shed. A house. A 'For Sale' sign clinging to a fence post.

A burst of gunshots.

METAL SHRIEKS. The sign BUCKLES, bullet-riddled, crashing into the dust. Blake ejects the spent shell, pockets it. A ritual.

EXT. HIGHWAY A1 - DAY

Road trains and dust-streaked utes thunder past, kicking heatwaves off the sun-baked highway.

To one side – endless crop stubble, dry and desolate. The other side – a distant shimmer of Spencer Gulf, barely visible through the haze.

The Flinders Ranges rise ahead, ancient, unmoving.

A SIX-YEAR-OLD SUV cruises south – too clean, too city for this stretch of road.

INT. SUV - DRIVING - DAY

JUDY LOCK (40s) grips the wheel, manicured nails tapping absently. Her city clothes remain crisp despite the long drive, but tension sits in her shoulders.

Beside her, SARA (16) slouches, one earbud in, the other dangling. Dark-rimmed eyes flick to the passing landscape – bored, unimpressed. Her chin tilts upward, defiant by default.

Judy glances in the rearview mirror...

KYLE (14) hunches in the backseat, small for his age. A healing cut above his left eye slashes a fresh scar into his skin. A tourism brochure rests on his lap, his thumb glides over a smooth worry stone in slow, practiced circles.

Beside him, FREDDIE, a scruffy Jack Russell, dozes, blissfully unaware.

Kyle reads aloud from the brochure, the worry stone clicking faster between his fingers – too fast, like counting down to something:

KYLE

"The tranquil wilderness of the Flinders Ranges offers peaceful solitude and starry nights far from the noise of city life. A perfect retreat for those seeking quiet reflection. Leave all your troubles behind."

Sara snorts.

JUDY

Sounds perfect. Just what you need.

Kyle's free hand shoots to his scar, a nervous gesture.

EXT. COUNTRY DIRT ROAD - DAY

The SUV rumbles onto a dirt road, trailing a cloud of dust.

Miles of dry, empty crop stubble stretch in every direction. Nowhere to run. Nowhere to hide.

The SUV slows at a rusted gate. Beyond it - a long, dirt driveway, flanked by gnarled trees.

SARA  
(flat, unimpressed)  
Is this it?

EXT. LOCK PROPERTY - DAY

The SUV rumbles down a tree-lined driveway.

Across the paddocks, the neighbour's house looms on a rise. Sunlight glares off its windows - hard, hostile.

The Lock farmhouse emerges - weathered, wrapped in a corrugated iron fence dulled with age. Rust stains streak the metal like dried blood.

The engine cuts.

The landscape settles into a sharp, unnatural quiet.

Freddie bolts from the car, racing toward a patch of grass.

DAVE LOCK (40s) swings open the wooden gate - buzz-cut, mechanic's hands, city edge not quite worn off.

Freddie barrels into him. Dave crouches to meet him.

DAVE LOCK (40s) swings the wooden gate wide - blond buzz-cut

DAVE  
At least someone missed me.

Judy steps up and kisses him, quick. Automatic.

Kyle and Sara hang back, scanning their new world - cautious.

SARA  
We're in the middle of nowhere.

KYLE  
(hopeful)  
It's different out here. Maybe  
better.

They drift toward the fence, looking back down the dirt road.  
In the distance – an empty paddock. A lone haystack slouches  
in the far corner.

Kyle's gaze drops.

At the base of a fence post: EIGHT SPENT SHOTGUN SHELLS,  
arranged in a perfect circle. Sun-faded plastic. Brass  
glinting in the sun.

He crouches slightly, unsure. Sara peers over his shoulder.

SARA  
(sarcastic)  
Nice.

The wind stirs the trees. No birds.

By the gate, Dave and Judy watch their children.

JUDY  
(low)  
I hope this was the right call.

Dave breathes deep. The dust. The silence.

DAVE  
No noise. No bullies.  
(scanning the horizon)  
It's a good place to start over.

He kisses her forehead.

EXT. LOCK PROPERTY - DAY

Kyle, Sara, and Freddie wander outside when...

THREE MOTORBIKES ROAR PAST.

They whip around on the dirt road, dust spitting from their  
tyres. The riders circle back, skidding to a stop opposite  
the fence.

Freddie barks, sharp. Sara scoops him up, arms tense.

BLAKE JONES (18), BRAYDON JONES (17), and BILLY JONES (16)  
straddle their bikes. Jeans, T-shirts, no helmets. Tanned,  
fit. Blake sports a fading yellow bruise around his left eye.

The Jones house looms behind them – windows like hollow eyes, watching.

BLAKE  
Well, well. New neighbours.

SARA  
(flat, with subtle edge)  
Depends who's asking.

BLAKE  
(a hint of bitterness)  
Blake. That's Braydon. Billy.

BILLY  
Dad promised Blake this land.

Blake cuts him a sharp look – shut up.

BRAYDON  
Five generations of Jones' blood in  
this soil.

Braydon's silver chain glints, pendant swinging slow.

FLASHBACK – KYLE'S MIND

Quick flashes. Brutal.

A silver chain glints in sunlight.

Sneakers circle him on concrete.

VOICE (O.S.)  
(vicious whisper)  
"Filthy poofteer."

A boot slams into his ribs.

Kyle curls into himself, protecting his head.

CRACK – Knuckles collide with his face.

BACK TO THE PRESENT

Kyle blinks hard. His breath shallow. Tight. A hand flies to his scar.

SARA  
Guess we beat you to it.

Blake's smile fades – his gaze sweeps the property, assessing, weighing. Something colder settles in.

BLAKE  
Enjoy it while it lasts.

BRAYDON  
(nods to Freddie)  
Who's the rat?

SARA  
(defensive)  
If you mean our dog, his name is  
Freddie.

BRAYDON  
(laughs, pointing to Kyle)  
Nah, I mean him.

The brothers explode into laughter, slapping handlebars.

Kyle's stare locks onto Braydon's chain – a gut punch.

Sara's eyes dart between them, alarm flashing.

SARA  
Let's go, Kyle.

Kyle doesn't move. Hands clench. Chest heaves.

BLAKE  
Come on, Kyle, off you go.

Sara nudges him – Kyle bolts. Tears burn, but it's rage, not sobs.

The Jones boys rev their engines, dust kicking up as they peel toward the Flinders Ranges, laughter choking the air.

INT. LOCK FARMHOUSE - KYLE'S BEDROOM - DAY

Kyle huddles on his bed, notebook braced against his knees. His pencil slashes the page. The scratch of graphite – fast, frantic. Paper ripping. His ragged breath.

The drawing beneath: stick figures circling a smaller one.

In his left hand – a stress ball. His fingers crush it, knuckles blanching – squeeze, release, squeeze, release.

A knock.

Dave steps in. Pauses – eyes locking onto Kyle's hands. The stress ball warps in his grip. The pencil digs deep, nearly breaking.

Dave exhales – shoulders sagging. Worn. Worried.

INT. LOCK FARMHOUSE – KITCHEN/FAMILY ROOM – DAY

Judy and Sara sit at the table. Dave slumps into a chair, rubbing his face.

JUDY  
How's he doing?

DAVE  
Better. Stress ball and notebook help.

JUDY  
(to Sara)  
What happened?

SARA  
We met the neighbours. Wankers.

JUDY  
Sara!

Sara rolls her eyes, stalks down the hall.

Judy and Dave watch her go. A beat.

JUDY (CONT'D)  
(quietly)  
Should we talk to their parents?

Dave tenses. A muscle jumps in his jaw.

DAVE  
(low, firm)  
Let's not get off on the wrong foot.

Judy exhales, rubbing her arms.

A motorbike tears past the house – loud, intrusive.

INT. LOCK FARMHOUSE – SARA'S BEDROOM – DAY

Sara sits on her bed, phone in hand, scrolling through old photos – laughing with friends outside a movie theatre, a sun-drenched beach party, city skyline selfies. A different life.

A motorbike thunders past, rattling the windowpanes. Then another. The house shivers under the noise... then stills.



Sara glances toward the noise, irritation flashing across her face.

Kyle appears in the doorway, clutching his notebook, eyes wide. He flinches at the buzz of a fly.

KYLE  
(urgent, whispering)  
They came back.

Sara straightens, her annoyance fading.

SARA  
They're leaving. Listen.

Kyle holds his breath. The engines fade... then vanish. Relief flickers – until his eyes drift to the window. He stiffens.

Sara follows his gaze – outside, three figures on motorbikes idle at the tree line. Too distant to identify, but watching. Unmistakably watching.

Just below the window, she notices something on the verandah – “FUK OFF” scrawled crudely in the dust.

Sara's jaw tightens. She pockets her phone and moves to block Kyle's view.

SARA (CONT'D)  
C'mon. Let's keep exploring.

EXT. LOCK PROPERTY - BACK OF PROPERTY - DAY

Kyle and Sara wander deeper into the property, Freddie trotting ahead, nose twitching at every scent.

The wind picks up – dry and sharp. It rattles leaves in the gnarled trees, branches creaking like old joints.

A low hum of flies builds and fades.

The wind dies. Sudden stillness.

A large METAL SHED looms in the distance, its roller door yawning half-open, darkness spilling from within.

SARA  
What you reckon? Anything cool in there?

Kyle hesitates, shoulders tight, but before they can step closer –

They freeze.

Beyond the shed, a clearing stretches wide. Scattered across the dirt – DOZENS OF CROSSES, lashed from sticks and twine, driven into uneven rows. Some lean, others stand rigid and straight. A haphazard graveyard.

Sara steps forward, swallowing hard.

The crosses vary in size – some tiny, others knee-high. Fresh. Wrong.

Kyle kneels beside one, drawn to a SMALL, DARK BUNDLE hanging from the centre. A DEAD BIRD, twisted in rusted wire. Feathers stiff, matted with dried blood.

He leans closer, noticing something odd. The blood isn't random – there's a crude pattern carved into the bird's chest. Three small circles arranged in a triangle. Still wet.

KYLE  
(whispered, shaky)  
What...

Kyle jerks back, stumbling into Sara.

SARA  
(hoarse, urgent)  
Let's get out of here.

They're already moving. Freddie lingers, hackles raised, a low growl rumbling.

As they hurry away, neither notices the FRESH BOOT PRINTS pressed into the dirt at the edge of the crosses – large, deep, deliberate. Multiple sets. Someone's been standing here. Watching.

EXT. LOCK PROPERTY – BACK OF PROPERTY – DAY

Dave and Judy follow Kyle and Sara to the clearing. They round the shed and stop short – dozens of crosses, just as the children described. A dead bird hangs from one.

DAVE  
(quiet, tense)  
Bloody hell! This wasn't here  
yesterday.

Freddie barks, refusing to enter the makeshift graveyard.

DAVE (CONT'D)  
Back to the house. Now.

INT. LOCK FARMHOUSE - KITCHEN/FAMILY ROOM - DAY

Dave sits at his laptop, Kyle and Sara hovering behind him. Judy paces by the window. Dave types: "crosses sticks rural Australia"

Search results populate. Dave clicks on a farming forum thread.

DAVE  
(reading aloud)  
"Old practice... boundary  
disputes... territorial  
warnings..."

He scrolls down, frowning.

DAVE (CONT'D)  
(quieter)  
"Old farmers used to do that to  
scare off pests."  
(beat, darker realization)  
"Or people."

Silence. The weight of understanding settles.

Kyle's hand finds his worry stone, rolling it between his fingers.

JUDY  
People?

Dave closes the laptop, jaw tight.

DAVE  
We don't scare.

EXT. LOCK PROPERTY - BACK OF PROPERTY - DAY

The sky burns orange as Dave works alone, yanking crosses from the earth, snapping them one by one, splinters flying. His movements are sharp, deliberate - each break a small act of defiance.

DAVE  
(mutters to himself)  
Not on my land.

He wipes sweat from his brow, glancing up. A lone kangaroo grazes in the paddock, watching.

EXT. LOCK PROPERTY - Paddock - DAY

The family stands at the fence line, watching a small mob of kangaroos grazing in the paddock. Their ears twitch, alert but calm.

SARA  
(whispering, awed)  
Cool!

Kyle watches, mesmerized. A rare moment of peace.

Sara pulls out her phone, lining up a photo - CLICK. CLICK.

The distant roar of motorbikes. The kangaroos freeze.

KYLE  
(tense)  
Oh no.

The bikes tear past the paddock, engines snarling. The kangaroos bolt.

Kyle rushes to the fence, scanning the field. Empty. His hands clench. Jaw tightens. Fear gives way to something else.

KYLE (CONT'D)  
(voice breaking, furious)  
They're scaring them away on purpose.

EXT. LOCK PROPERTY - Paddock - MOMENTS LATER

Freddie zigzags through the grass, sniffing eagerly, tail a blur. Dave, Sara, and Kyle walk where the kangaroos were grazing.

Dave crouches down, gestures at scattered black droppings.

DAVE  
See that? Kangaroo pooh.

Sara wrinkles her nose. Kyle kneels beside Dave, his curiosity flickering through a guarded expression.

DAVE (CONT'D)  
It's good stuff - helps the soil.  
Plus, the way they hop spreads seeds around.

Kyle glances up, eyes lighting up for a moment, though his posture stays tense.

KYLE  
(quiet, almost testing)  
That's pretty cool.

Dave smiles, picking up on Kyle's interest.

DAVE  
We'll do some surfing later. Check  
out more kangaroo facts.

He straightens, shaking the dirt from his hands.

DAVE (CONT'D)  
First, I've got something for us to  
do.

INT. LOCK PROPERTY - OLD SHEARING SHED - DAY

Dave and Kyle stand at a weathered workbench, tools strewn  
across it. Dave nods to an empty pegboard on the wall.

DAVE  
Hang the tools up there.

Kyle grabs a hammer, testing its weight, then hooks it  
carefully.

DAVE (CONT'D)  
This shed's yours too - for  
projects, whatever.

Kyle gives a quick nod, a faint smile tugging his lips.

KYLE  
Thanks, Dad.

He picks up metal cutters, squeezing them once.

Dave opens a cupboard, sliding a box of .22 ammo onto the  
shelf, moving quickly but not quick enough.

Kyle's eyes snap to a .22 rifle inside. He freezes, face  
blank, stare locked.

KYLE (CONT'D)  
(quiet)  
Where'd that come from?

Dave falters, glancing at Kyle, then away.

DAVE  
It was Grandpa's.

Kyle's eyes stick to the rifle a beat too long – curiosity warring with something darker. He nods, barely.

Dave rummages on the workbench, pulling out a pocketknife – wooden handle worn smooth, blade folded tight.

DAVE (CONT'D)

This was his too. Gave it to me  
when I was your age.

He offers it – Kyle takes it slow, fingers tracing the wood. He flips it in his hand, testing.

KYLE

Nice.

His gaze flicks to the cupboard – quick, sharp – then back to the knife. He hangs more tools, hands steady now.

Dave watches, jaw tight. Pride flickers, but his eyes linger on Kyle. He shuts the cupboard – CLICK – too hard, the sound hanging.

INT. LOCK FARMHOUSE – KITCHEN/FAMILY ROOM – DAY

Kyle hunches at the kitchen table, laptop glowing with kangaroo pics – leaping, blurred motion.

KYLE

Dad, kangaroos can't go backwards.  
How wild is that?

Dave lugs flattened moving boxes. He pauses, scanning the screen.

DAVE

Makes sense. Gotta keep moving  
forward.

SARA (O.S.)

The shower's busted!

Judy twists the kitchen tap – nothing

JUDY

Great. No water.

Dave drops the boxes. The THUD makes everyone flinch.

DAVE

I'll check the pump.

EXT. LOCK PROPERTY - RAINWATER TANK - DAY

The pump sits under a plastic cover. Clean, well-maintained – but silent.

A black extension cord runs from it toward the shearing shed.

Dave crouches, presses the switch. Nothing. He frowns.

DAVE

This thing's barely six months  
old...

He follows the cable with his eyes – toward the shed.

EXT. LOCK PROPERTY - OLD SHEARING SHED - DAY

Dave finds the extension cord plugged in. The outlet is dry, undamaged. But the switch is off.

DAVE

Did you or Sara touch this?

Kyle shakes his head. Dave flips the switch on. Nothing.

He stares a moment. Then turns and walks back.

EXT. LOCK PROPERTY - RAINWATER TANK - DAY

Dave kneels by the pump. His fingers run along the extension cord. He stops cold. A section has been sliced open. The copper wires severed, then twisted back together – badly. Deliberate.

Dave exhales hard through his nose.

KYLE

Is it broken?

DAVE

I'll grab a new lead. Should be  
fine.

He moves off, too quickly.

Kyle watches him go. Something's off.

INT. LOCK FARMHOUSE - KITCHEN/FAMILY ROOM - NIGHT

The kitchen tap runs. Dave watches the water, arms crossed. Uneasy.

DAVE  
Kyle, why don't you check for  
kangaroos?

Kyle hesitates, then grabs his phone and slips outside.

JUDY  
(once Kyle's gone)  
What's wrong?

DAVE  
The pump was fine. Somebody cut the  
cord.

Judy exhales, barely audible.

JUDY  
The crosses... now this? We should  
call the police.

DAVE  
Perhaps the locals are just testing  
the new people. It'll all blow  
over.

Judy isn't convinced. Neither is he.

EXT. LOCK PROPERTY - Paddock - DAY

Kyle stands still, phone raised, framing the shot – kangaroos grazing in the golden light. One large buck lifts its head, ears twitching. Listening to something Kyle can't hear yet.

ENGINES ROAR.

The kangaroos bolt as dirt bikes rip across the paddock, gravel spraying.

Kyle stiffens as Blake and Braydon skid to a stop, engines growling. Billy lags behind, dragging a freshly killed deer by its antlers – its body thumping lifelessly against the dirt, leaving a dark smear.

BLAKE  
City rat playing tourist?

Kyle's eyes lock onto the carcass – matted blood, twisted limbs, blank stare.

BRAYDON  
Needs a taste of real country life.



BILLY

Dad had me shooting before I could walk.

Braydon flips a worn hunting knife, the name "Jones" carved into its blade.

Kyle freezes. Breath shudders.

BILLY (CONT'D)

(gleeful)

Gonna puke, city boy?

BLAKE

Don't like it? Get off my land.

Kyle stumbles back – then runs. His legs shake, breath ragged.

His notebook slips from his pocket – lost in the dirt. The pages flutter in the dust, sketches of kangaroos mixing with dirt and fear.

For a split second, he stops. Fists clench, knuckles white. His hand drifts toward his pocket where the knife rests. The impulse to fight back flickers across his face. Then fear wins out.

He keeps running. Laughter chases him.

INT. LOCK FARMHOUSE – KITCHEN/FAMILY ROOM – DAY

Sara unpacks a box labeled KITCHEN, stacking dishes near the sink. Judy loads the dishwasher, moving with methodical efficiency.

Sara's phone pings. She glances down –

A social media post: her friends at a concert, arms slung around each other, grinning. The caption: #missingyou.

Sara's thumb hovers over the heart button. A beat. Then, she pushes the phone aside, jaw tightening.

Judy glances at the clock, frowning.

JUDY

You seen Kyle?

Sara barely registers the question, still caught in the ache of missing home.

SARA

Huh? Oh—

(shrugs)

Thought he was in his room.

Judy, half-distracted, unwraps a glass, setting it down.

JUDY

Check for me?

Sara exhales through her nose, irritation flickering, but she pushes off the counter and heads down the hall.

INT. LOCK FARMHOUSE - KYLE'S BEDROOM - DAY

The door creaks open. The room is empty.

EXT. LOCK PROPERTY - OLD EUCALYPTUS TREE - DAY

Sara moves through the yard, her casual calling belied by the tension in her shoulders.

SARA

Kyle? Kyle?

Her pace quickens as she scans the property.

She stops. Muffled sobs.

Under the twisted limbs of an old eucalyptus, Kyle sits hunched, crushing leaves between his fingers. Each CRUNCH of the leaves unnaturally loud in the stillness.

A TWIG SNAPS somewhere behind him. He freezes. But when he turns — nothing.

The sharp scent of eucalyptus fills the air. He inhales deeply, grounding himself with each breath.

Sara hesitates, then steps closer.

SARA (CONT'D)

Mum's looking for you.

Kyle sniffs, swipes at his nose. Silent.

Sara drops down beside him.

SARA (CONT'D)

Okay. What happened?

EXT. LOCK PROPERTY - OLD EUCALYPTUS TREE - MOMENTS LATER

Sara leans against the tree, fists clenched, chest rising sharp and fast.

SARA

Bastards.

(beat)

Doesn't matter where you go. People  
are still assholes.

Kyle drops his gaze. Tears threaten. He grabs another eucalyptus leaf, crushes it between his fingers, inhales the sharp scent.

SARA (CONT'D)

(nodding to the leaves)

That helping?

KYLE

(quiet, raw)

Yeah. The smell... it's real.  
Something outside my head.

(beat)

Like drawing. If I can focus on  
something else, the scary stuff  
shrinks.

He breathes in deeper, grounding himself.

KYLE (CONT'D)

I can't control them... but I can  
control this.

Sara nudges his shoulder, a flicker of a smile.

SARA

We'll figure it out. Two geniuses  
like us. Easy!

Kyle nods - wanting to believe her.

EXT. LOCK PROPERTY - DRIVEWAY - DUSK

The sky burns - oranges, purples, yellows bleeding together like a fresh bruise. Kyle and Sara walk Freddie along the dirt driveway, their footsteps crunching against the earth.

Freddie STOPS DEAD - muscles tense, growl rumbling low and dangerous.

They follow his gaze to a fence post. Something nailed there.

A dead rat nailed to the post, crucifixion-style. Fresh blood pools beneath it. A scrap of paper: "CITY RAT."

Kyle's breathing quickens, shallow and fast. His free hand fumbles into his pocket, locking onto the smooth worry stone. The world narrows to a tunnel – just him and the bloody message.

Sara presses a fist to her mouth, gagging.

SARA  
We need to tell Dad.

INT. LOCK FARMHOUSE - KITCHEN/FAMILY ROOM - NIGHT

Dave examines the crumpled note, jaw tight. Judy paces by the window, arms wrapped around herself.

DAVE  
This stops now. I'm calling the police.

EXT. LOCK PROPERTY - GARDEN - SAME TIME

Kyle and Sara stand in the garden, watching Freddie. The wind sighs through the trees. A loose sheet of tin taps against the shearing shed – rhythmic, almost soothing.

Then – the tapping stops.

A spotlight flickers on.

The hum of an engine. Sharp. Too close.

SARA  
So much for our walk.  
(sighs)  
All this space and we can't go anywhere.

Kyle stares at the fence line, his expression distant, trapped. He nods once, a barely perceptible movement.

Then – GUNSHOTS. Sharp, cracking. Too close.

The back door swings open. Judy gestures urgently, ushering them indoors. Kyle and Sara, Freddie in tow, scamper to the verandah.

JUDY  
Get inside. Now!

Before they can move, the ute veers abruptly. Spotlights lock onto them – blinding, merciless. They are caught like prey in a hunter's sight. The lights hold them, savoring the moment.

A gunshot. No way to tell where it came from.

They scramble for the house – clumsy, panicked. Kyle stumbles, crashing to his knees. Sara grabs his arm, yanks him up.

INT. LOCK FARMHOUSE - KITCHEN/FAMILY ROOM - NIGHT

Kyle sits on the couch, fists clenched in his lap. His lips move silently – counting. His fingers tap against his knee in a controlled rhythm: one, two, three, four... one, two, three, four...

Judy kneels beside him, brushing damp hair from his forehead. Her hands are gentle, but her eyes are tight with fear.

JUDY

That's it, honey. Slow and steady.

Kyle nods, his free hand still rolling the worry stone between his fingers.

SARA

Mum, stop hovering.

Across the room, Dave paces, gripping the phone tight.

DAVE

(into phone, strained)

Yeah, I need to report a disturbance. Our neighbours are spotlighting the house. Shooting. Scaring my kids–

He stops. Listens. His jaw clenches.

DAVE (CONT'D)

(disbelief creeping in)

No, not "agricultural management."  
They're targeting us.

Another pause.

DAVE (CONT'D)

(low, bitter)

Fine. We'll wait.

He slams the phone down. The clock on the wall ticks over to 8:30 PM.

Judy presses a hand to Kyle's shoulder.

JUDY  
They'll be here soon.