

CONFORM

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**ACT ONE**

INT. ELDRIDGE HOUSE - KITCHEN - DAY

On a kitchen bench, WHITE NOISE blares from a radio.

Incessant. Suffocating.

The kitchen swims in 80's design: Pine panelling, floral curtains, blue laminate countertops and white appliances.

ERIC ELDRIDGE (40) cooks bacon in his dressing gown, whistling. If he could he'd do it naked, bacon grease spit be damned.

The reason he can't be naked slaps off the radio. SABLE ELDRIDGE (15), half-awake, plops down on a stool.

SABLE

That noise drives me crazy.

ERIC

Really? I find it comforting.

Eric serves up bacon, sitting across from Sable.

SABLE

It's like scratching inside your head, how do you not hear that?

ERIC

Would you prefer scratching or bells ringing in your ears?

SABLE

Neither, obviously.

ERIC

You gotta pick one. That's basic hypothetical protocol.

SABLE

Fine, I choose "White Noise"... By The Living End.

ERIC

Very funny. Keep that sense of humour with you at school today.

SABLE

Why'd you have to remind me?

ERIC

Because I'm a sadist. Don't forget these.

Eric slides Sable a small tray of pills. Antimalarials and NSAIDs.

SABLE

I'm a big girl now, Dad. You don't have to remind me.

ERIC

That's right, you're my big girl.

Eric gives Sable an excessive amount of smooches on the forehead.

SABLE

Stop, stop, I'm eating!

EXT. ELDRIDGE HOUSE - FRONT YARD - DAY

Sable and Eric step out onto a wide suburban street lined with old weatherboards and triple front brick houses. The dry lawn is survived by succulents and agapanthus.

ERIC

Ah, hold on, forgot something. Chuck your bag in the car, I'll be back in a sec.

Eric hands Sable the keys to his crappy '96 Holden Berlina and heads back inside.

Sable gets to the car and opens the boot, slinging her bag in. As she closes it, she notices something across the road.

Two teenage boys pat a small, white dog.

SABLE

Gaston?

Gaston, the dog, reacts to her voice. The two boys look up as well. The older boy waves, smiling. The younger holds his mouth firm, roughing up Gaston's chest fur.

SABLE (CONT'D)

Gaston! C'mere, buddy!

Sable slaps her thighs. Gaston goes to move towards her, but gets held back. The younger boy keeps two fingers hooked through Gaston's collar.

SABLE (CONT'D)  
Hey, let him go! Gaston, come!

Gaston pulls harder, barking, his feet sliding uselessly on the pavement. Sable stomps towards them.

SABLE (CONT'D)  
Let him go, now!

Sable goes to step out from behind the Holden -

A CAR RUSHES PAST, nearly taking her out.

Sable freezes, stunned.

The younger boy lets Gaston go. He scampers over to her, jumping at Sable's legs.

Eric comes out the front door.

ERIC  
Got it, let's go... Sable?

Gaston yips his way over to Eric.

ERIC (CONT'D)  
Hey, what're you doing out here?  
Come on, in the backyard with you.

Sable checks back across the street, but the boys are gone.

EXT. SCHOOL - FRONT GATE - DAY

The school consists of blocky red-brick facades separated by winding concrete paths contained behind a black iron fence topped with spikes. It could easily be a prison.

The Holden pulls up in front of a sign that reads "ZEPHYR RIDGE SCHOOL".

Kids stream past, chatting and laughing.

Sable jumps out of the car and grabs her bag from the boot, eager to get away.

ERIC  
Stay out of the sun, pumpkin!

Sable gives a half-hearted wave backwards.