

**INT. NAN'S HOUSE - BATHROOM - DAY**

TAMIKA (27, Aboriginal) pulls a weird face in the mirror, dropping her jaw low and rolling her eyes back into her head. She smooths her fingers over the skin under her eyes, moving outwards in sweeping motions. She's dressed smartly in a blouse and pencil skirt.

TAMIKA (V.O.)  
(to audience) Hey, I'm Tamika.

CUT TO: NAN (75, Caucasian) wears a frilly pink dressing gown and pulls the same face in the mirror. She stops and drops her head backwards slightly, pushing her chin upwards and bunching her lips in another unflattering expression.

TAMIKA (V.O.)  
And this is my Nan.

CUT TO WIDE: Tamika and Nan stand side-by-side, both reflected in the mirror of a kitsch peach-coloured bathroom. They are pulling the same uncomfortable expression as they sweep their fingers up their necks. They are perfectly synchronised.

TAMIKA (V.O.)  
Don't worry, we're not trying to  
summon the devil. We're doing Nan's  
morning facial routine she taught  
me. This is supposed to stop us  
from getting double chins.

In unison, they drop their heads to look directly into the mirror, open their mouths wide and stick out their tongues as far as they can.

TAMIKA (V.O.)  
I'm not sure what this does.

**EXT. NAN'S HOUSE - BACK VERANDAH - DAY**

A small white dog, MOPPET, shakes with excitement as it waits expectantly by the screen door. Tamika opens the door just enough to pop a heaped bowl of dog food outside.

TAMIKA (V.O.)  
This is Moppet.

Moppet inhales the food.

TAMIKA (V.O.)  
She's a total guts.

The door inches open again and Tamika places a bowl of water outside. Moppet tries to dash into the house, but Tamika nudges her back with her foot before closing the door in Moppet's face.

TAMIKA (V.O.)  
Nan won't let her inside the house.

CUT TO: Moppet sits centre-frame on the verandah, wide eyed and angelic.

TAMIKA (V.O.)  
Which is a frikkn' crime against nature. Literally.

**EXT. NAN'S HOUSE - BACK YARD - MONTAGE**

CUT BETWEEN various shots of Moppet getting up to mischief in the back yard. Drum music plays in the background.

TAMIKA (V.O.)  
She's very clearly an inside dog, all small and delicate and shit. She's not naturally equipped for outdoor survival. But Nan's insistence that all dogs belong outside has forced Moppet into adapting to the rigours of life in the wilderness in true Charles-Darwin style.

- A shot of Moppet emerging from the bushes covered in twigs and dirt.

- A shot of Moppet sitting by a teeny-tiny log fire, with a small makeshift tent erected from a t-shirt.

- A shot of Moppet perched in the high-up branches of a mango tree.

- A shot of Moppet lying in a garden bed, surrounded by flowers. She turns her head to look at the camera and we see the fur around her mouth is soaked in bright red blood.

**EXT. NAN'S HOUSE - BACK VERANDAH - DAY**

CUT BACK TO: Moppet on the verandah looking angelic. Tamika gives her an 'I'm sorry' look before turning away.

**INT. NAN'S HOUSE - HALLWAY - DAY**

Nan and Tamika cross paths in the hallway.

NAN  
You're going to be late.

TAMIKA  
I'm not going to be late.

**INT. NAN'S HOUSE - LOUNGE ROOM - DAY**

Tamika drops into an armchair and pulls on a pair of heels. A display unit behind her is filled with china ornaments.

Inside the display unit, a china monkey ornament comes to life and starts banging its fists against the glass, as if desperate to break free.

TAMIKA (V.O.)  
And that's my overactive  
imagination. Just ignore it.

Tamika finishes putting on her shoes, gets up and strides out of shot. The monkey ornament returns to its inanimate form.

**TITLE CARD: BITING DUST**

**EXT. NAN'S HOUSE - FRONT - DAY**

FLASHBACK: A modest but lovingly presented ex-housing commission home.

A 20-years-younger Nan is perched on the stairs as she ties the shoe laces of a 6-year-old Tamika. Little Tamika wears a school uniform and a back pack that's almost as big as her.

CUT TO: A bus rushes by, filling the screen. It passes and we're back in modern-day. 20 years has gone by, but the house is still in beautiful condition.

Tamika is trying to leave as Nan hands her a piece of toast and glass of juice. Tamika guzzles the juice as Nan pep-talks her.

NAN  
Stay calm. Stay confident. You know  
your stuff. You can do this - and  
you really do need this job,  
Tamika.

Tamika hands back the empty glass and shoves the piece of toast in her mouth, nodding her head furiously. She knows she really needs this.

NAN (CONT'D)

And come home at a reasonable time  
tonight - I'll make a celebratory  
dinner for us.

Tamika gives Nan a swift kiss on the cheek.

TAMIKA

(rapidly) thanks Nan love you bye!

NAN

Love you too...

Tamika runs awkwardly in her pencil skirt and high heels  
towards the road.

NAN (CONT'D)

Dinner at 6 Tamika! Don't be late!

Tamika throws her hand up in a wave without looking back.

Tamika playfully sticks her tongue out at Jessie as she leaves.

**INT. NAN'S HOUSE - KITCHEN - DAY**

Tamika is cooking up a storm in the kitchen.

NAN (O.S.)  
How's it going love?

TAMIKA  
(calling out) Yep, good!

NAN (O.S.)  
I made some jelly for dessert.  
Would you mind going and getting  
it? It's setting in the garage  
fridge.

Tamika freezes in action, looking up. Is that fear on her face?

**EXT. NAN'S BACKYARD - GARAGE - DAY**

Tamika stands outside the door to the garage, seemingly reluctant to enter. Moppet is at her feet. Tamika glances down at her.

TAMIKA  
Together?

Tamika steps forward and opens the door.

**INT. NAN'S GARAGE - DAY**

It's eerily dark and still. Odd, dark shapes form a frame around a rusted old fridge that sits on the opposite side of the garage.

Tamika stares at the fridge. It groans. Slowly the door of the fridge starts to creep open.

Tamika shakes her head - looks again. The fridge door is closed - silent and still.

Taking a deep breath, Tamika makes a run for it - bolting to the fridge.

She rips open the fridge door, pulls out a bright green jelly, slams the door shut.

She bolts out of the garage.

TAMIKA  
Moppet!

Moppet dashes out of the garage and Tamika slams the door shut.

**EXT. NAN'S BACKYARD - DAY**

Tamika realises she's being watched. She quickly walks back to the house, not making eye-contact with JACKIE - a neighbour.

Jackie, a woman in her 50's, stands in a yard full of garden gnomes. She cradles a gnome in her arms and smokes a cigarette as she watches Tamika disappear back into the house.

**INT. NAN'S HOUSE - DINING ROOM - NIGHT**

The candles are lit and Nan and Tamika are finally having their dinner. Tamika has almost demolished her stir-fry, while Nan takes little bites and pushes her food around her plate.

TAMIKA  
You feeling ok Nan?

NAN  
I'm just tired.

TAMIKA  
You've been tired a lot lately.

NAN  
No surprises why.

Tamika decides to ignore the dig.

TAMIKA  
(motioning to their dinner) What do you think?

NAN  
It's different.

TAMIKA  
(incredulous) It's stir-fry.

Nan's not impressed.

TAMIKA (CONT'D)  
What's wrong with stir-fry?

NAN  
I still remember what they did to our boys.

TAMIKA V.O  
Huh? (taking in her meaning) Oh, Nan. Come on. Really?

Nan starts rubbing her forehead. She's acting a bit strange.

NAN  
I'm going to get some dessert.

Tamika looks up at a painting on the wall. It's an Australian bush landscape. A young woman in an old-fashioned dress stands at a fence post, looking pensively out into the trees.

Nan comes back into the room with a bowl of ice cream and jelly.

TAMIKA

Nan, please eat the stir-fry.

NAN

I won't eat that.

TAMIKA V.O

Nan! Jessie gave me the recipe!

NAN

You have no idea, you silly little girl!

Nan is rubbing her head as she goes off on a rant.

Tamika is shocked into silence. Her eyes glaze over and Nan's voice become muffled. Tamika turns her gaze back to the painting.

The woman in the painting starts to move - she reaches into a pocket in her skirts and pulls out a match. She lights it against the fence post. Walks to the corner of the picture frame. Sets it on fire.

SLAM.

Nan has stormed out of the room, slamming the door behind her.

**EXT. NAN'S BACKYARD - DAY**

It's a pale, still morning. The back yard sits in silence. Moppet lies in the little tent, the little fire reduced to cold, blackened coals.

CUT TO:

Tamika sits on the ground and leans against a fence, smoking a cigarette. Suddenly, the fence rattles. Tamika jumps, quickly hiding her cigarette.

JAYLEN

Hello!

TASHIE

Hello!