

INT. SUBURBAN HOME - MORNING

The house is empty of life. The air rasps through the vents like breathing. Light peers between the blinds, illuminating the many motes of dust clouding the air.

Outside, there is the muffled sound of car doors being shut, and a car driving off. Moments later, the front door swings open. JAMES, a man in his mid-30s, shuts the door behind him, pocketing the keys while taking his slippers off.

James heads towards the kitchen. Some decor falls off a perfectly level shelf, thunking loudly against ratty hardwood. He replies offhandedly as he rifles through cabinets.

JAMES

Just went outside for a sec.

He is speaking to no one. The house is empty. ANNA responds.

ANNA

The kids?

Her voice echoes from everywhere, ghost-like and faint. James removes some pancake mix from the cabinets. He starts making pancakes.

JAMES

Headed for my sister's, remember?

ANNA

You didn't tell me.

The cabinets drift slightly open and then shut. James gives them a glance over his shoulder.

JAMES

Maybe I forgot. The kids gave me all the hugs and kisses in the world and told me to tell you they'd miss you.

Anna laughs, broken chiming fading to the sound of vents flapping.

ANNA

They did not.

JAMES

They didn't. They were mostly asleep. I could see it in their eyes, though.

ANNA

...Their closed eyes?

JAMES

The very same.

The lights flutter, gentle laughter. Then a pensive buzzing. Anna's voice is a broken whisper.

ANNA

James... We need to...

The lights glow nearly blinding, before they flicker out.

James did not hear her. He stares at them for a moment, zoning out. He puts the batter on the stove pan. There is a distant banging.

A door bangs down the hall, snapping him back to attention. The sound stops as he looks towards it.

JAMES

...An?

The cabinets behind him all slam. James flinches. The house goes still. Stiffly, he tries to continue pouring the pancake mix.

JAMES

...Uh, I'm- I thought I'd make some-

The kitchen faucet wails. James, very slowly, goes to shut it off. He speaks gently.

JAMES

I'm sorry honey, could you repeat that?

He gradually turns the faucet off. As soon as it's fully shut, all the other sinks in the house burst open. James winces, bracing a hand against the wall.

JAMES

An! I need you to calm down for me.

The floorboards begin to crack and rattle. The cabinets rumble, bumping open and closed. His hands shake as he strokes the wall.

JAMES

I'm sorry An. I can't understand you right now. Please calm down.

The cacophony of sounds continues.

JAMES

Is it the kids, honey? I'm sorry, I must've forgotten to tell you. They won't be long, I promise.

The wallpaper splinters beneath his fingertips, and he stumbles back. He is tense, breathing tightly as he tries to remain calm.

JAMES

The chores then-? Have I- Maybe I didn't clean the sheets?

Behind him, the fireplace roars to life, and the floorboards scream as they begin to split. He curses, and darts down the hallway.

All of its doors swing at him, banging in a sick, discordant rhythm. A widening maw between the floorboards cracks towards him.

JAMES

ANNA! WAIT A SECOND!

He shoves into a bedroom, bruised by the doors, frantically rifling through every nook. He throws any papers he finds, drawings or old homework assignments, behind him to be crunched up by the sharp splinters of hardwood flooring.

There aren't many of them. The desks hold only empty picture frames and its walls are marked only by left behind scraps of torn off artwork. He throws himself back into the hallway.

JAMES

There's nothing left, An! I can't find anything!

There is no one there to respond. The fire roars in the living room, and the faucets still pour. It sounds like sobbing. Across the hall is a locked door, the only one that does not slam.

JAMES

YOUR OFFICE! CAN I GO IN?

There is no one there to stop him. James grits his teeth as he sprints towards it, breaking it open with his shoulder.

The office is no dirtier than it was the months ago that he last saw her in it, fine streaks of light scattering across her desk and armchair. James is frozen.

JAMES

Anne, I-

The house roars at him, so he runs. He tears through the room, throwing open drawers and ripping books from their shelves.

The stillness shatters with the first paperweight across the floor, the lights bloom through every sheaf of paper flying through the air.

JAMES

Come back, Anne!

He throws files out of cabinets and they're shredded into bits, throws her fine pens and they roll into that great big abyss. He stumbles and shoves and overturns everything, heaving sobs.

JAMES

Please. We can still do this. Please.

His back meets the wall. There is nothing left to throw. He sinks to the ground, his hands shaking, lined with paper cuts, spilling blood in slim rivulets.

He slumps, dripping blood into the maw that makes to swallow him.

JAMES

I love you, Annamarie. But- There's nothing left.

The house draws still, each door creaking to a slow swing. Ending nearly at his feet is an unmoving ravine. The only remaining sound is the distant, steady drip of the kitchen sink.

The house is torn through. Singularly unshredded before him, is a yellowed file, thrown open. Within are divorce papers.

A fine pen rolls over.