

MARY

by

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FADE IN:

EXT. VILLAGE - DUSK

The chaos of battle. Bullets, grenades, soldiers, civilians - everything flying. Helicopters punctuate the screaming, stirring up wind and dust.

In the midst of it, a young black soldier, JOSEPH JOHNSON, terrified and confused, spins in circles. He runs into

A HUT

and leans against the wall to catch his breath. Off-guard for a minute - a mistake. THE mistake.

Behind him, a scream. He spins, shooting the whole time, and sees his target--

THREE LITTLE GIRLS huddled against a wall.

He screams, the girls scream, one slouches forward - did he shoot her or is she protecting herself? - their screams joined by the war-cry of several Vietcong charging into the hut - there's his target, but he's off-guard, he's recoiling, panicked, fleeing like a coward out the back door.

SHOT in the back, he falls - face first - into the splaying mud, arms flayed out perpendicular to his body like Jesus crucified while

THE CROSS

he wears with his dogtags sinks into the mud.

INT. BEDROOM - MORNING

As his younger self hits the ground, his older self bolts up in bed. Only the CROSS is the same, and he instinctively grabs for it, while covering his mouth to stifle his screams.

Another dream-flashback-panic attack. 40 years of these show on his weary face.

Air. He needs air. He hobbles to the uncovered window, sucks in fresh air from the large hole broken out in the middle.

5 feet away from his window in the brownstone apartment next door sits IDA PULLEY, an older black woman with a permanent scowl etched into her disappointed face.

Her window is raised a few inches, enough to hear him scream. She looks up from her Bible, scrunches her eyes at Joseph like he's the devil himself interrupting her worship service.

JOSEPH
(mutters)
Morning, Miss Pulley.

He walks through the barren hallway to the

KITCHEN

From the near-empty cupboard, Joseph removes the lone OLD WINE BOTTLE. He drinks straight from it until it's empty, then sets it by the sink. Gripping the sink, he closes his eyes, waiting for salvation.

MATCH CUT TO:

BATHROOM

Gripping the bathroom sink, he stares at himself in the mirror. His eyes, though very kind, are not kind to himself.

He starts the shower, pulls off his undershirt, revealing the scars on his back.

He stretches out his arms slowly and achingly. He's a man still bearing a heavy cross.

KITCHEN - LATER

Dressed in a poor man's Sunday best, Joseph dries his bowl. He picks up the wine bottle, fills it with WATER, and places it back in the cupboard. He walks into the nearly barren

LIVING ROOM

to the card table where he marks time making wooden models of the HELICOPTERS that are scattered throughout the apartment. He picks one up, makes the motions and sounds of flying.

He checks his watch. Puts down the helicopter. Puts on his hat. Picks up the only key he has. And heads for the door. It's a life, indeed, but you couldn't really call it living.

I/E. BROOKLYN APARTMENT - DAY

Joseph walks out of the building at the same time as Ida. She's dressed to impress, in the way of older black women who live to attend church. Waving her Bible in his direction...

IDA
To church, Joseph?

As always, judgment reeks from her holier-than-thou mouth.

JOSEPH
(tipping his hat)
To church, Miss Pulley.

Joseph ambles past the CROWN HEIGHTS corner market, whistling "Amazing Grace." The streets are Sunday-quiet. He greets people he knows by tipping his hat.

CORNER GIRLS
(stopping their jump-rope
game)
Got any candy, Joseph?

Joseph digs in his pocket, throwing them some lifesavers.

CORNER GIRLS (CONT'D)
Thanks Joseph!

He tips his hat and enters the subway. Though numb, he would not call himself unhappy.

I/E. BROOKLYN BROWNSTONE - DAY

Joseph knocks on the door of a home in a nicer neighborhood.

No answer. He knocks louder.

An upstairs window opens. TYRONE, a young black man so pretty he has to try even harder to be bad, thrusts his head out.

TYRONE
What do you want, mother-fucker?
(recognizing Joseph)
Are you fuckin' early or what?

He glances at his watch, then throws shut the window.

Joseph waits patiently until. . .

Tyrone throws opens the door, thrusting a small package at him. Joseph takes it and begins to walk away.

TYRONE
That better get to my brother
unopened, my brother.

JOSEPH
(turning around)
It will.

TYRONE
(with a menacing look)
Because otherwise I'm gonna have to
kill you.

Joseph doesn't respond. He's heard this bit before.

TYRONE (CONT'D)
Nah, just kidding. There ain't
nothing inappropriate in there.
Just private. Right, Private?

He salutes Joseph. Joseph turns around, continues walking.

TYRONE (CONT'D)
Don't ask, don't tell, right
brother?

The back of Joseph's head nods as he walks on.

INT. SUBWAY TRAIN - DAY

Joseph enters the 3 train uptown at KINGSTON AVENUE. He
places the package under his hat on his lap, stares blankly
at it. Don't ask, don't tell, indeed.

EXT. HARLEM STREET - DAY

Joseph nearly trips over a DISHEVELED BUM bent over picking
up a coin outside the 148th Street station in Harlem.

DISHEVELED BUM
Find a penny, pick it up. . .

EXT. THE ABYSSINIAN BAPTIST CHURCH - DAY

Raucous gospel music bursts out the church doors.

Joseph sits down on the steps, watching the activity on the
Harlem street.

When the music ends, TONS OF CHURCHGOERS pour out of the
doors.

Joseph heads upstream and enters the church.

INT. CHURCH OFFICE - DAY

A well-dressed DEACON stops counting the piles of offering money and shakes hands with Joseph.

DEACON

Joseph. Always good to see you.

He reaches into his desk.

DEACON (CONT'D)

My baby brother in the lower borough giving you any trouble?

JOSEPH

No sir.

The deacon comes around the desk, bottle of Jameson whisky in one hand and an envelope in another. Joseph hands him the package in return for the whisky and the envelope.

DEACON

A little holy water for you. Have a happy Thanksgiving, Joseph.

JOSEPH

Thank you sir.

EXT. HARLEM STREET - DAY

Walking back to the subway, Joseph passes the same DISHEVELED BUM who almost salivates when he sees Joseph's bottle.

DISHEVELED BUM

Uhhh uhmm uhmm.

Joseph hands it to him sympathetically.

JOSEPH

Have a happy Thanksgiving, brother.

DISHEVELED BUM

Oh, let me pay you for that.

He flips him the penny. Joseph catches it, flips it back.

JOSEPH

Keep the change!

The bum tips the bottle toward Joseph, who continues walking.

As he enters an intersection, he hears a black woman to his right screaming out obscenities. He looks at

MESHELLE (20's), still drugged up from the night before - and from the looks of her, from the last 10 years. She violently drags behind her a BOY (3) and a GIRL (6). The sun catches and radiates the glittery word "ANGEL" on the girl's shirt.

MESHELLE

That mother-fuckin' BITCH! When I find her, I'll cut her mother-fuckin' throat open. Stepping out with MY man in MY bar during MY fuckin' shift. Look for her.

(yanking the girl)

Look for her!

Joseph catches the girl's eye.

She drops her mom's hand, stops in her tracks, staring at him.

He tips his head slightly at her, as if to commiserate.

Meshelle stops and looks back at her.

MESHELLE (CONT'D)

Get the fuck over here.

Joseph turns back, crosses the street. Meshelle turns the corner rapidly, swinging the boy behind her, and crosses the street behind Joseph. The girl follows.

MESHELLE (CONT'D)

No wonder he don't have no goddamn money to help with the rent. Bastard be spendin' it all on that ugly CUNT!

Joseph cringes as he walks.

MESHELLE (CONT'D)

I will find that prick and cut his dick off. Walk faster! Goddamn it, can't you walk faster?

She reaches down, yanks the boy up to carry him. She grabs for the girl's hand, but she won't give it to her.

MESHELLE (CONT'D)

Give me your fuckin' hand.

(louder)

Give me your fuckin' hand, I said!

Joseph hears a HARSH SLAP. He turns around, hoping that his witnessing of her behavior will stop it, but she's shameless, too strung out to notice.

The girl places her hand on her stinging cheek.

MESHELLE (CONT'D)

Goddamn you are in my way. Talk about a fuckin' mistake. If I didn't have you. . .

Her voice is cut off for a moment as Joseph descends the subway stairs.

INT. SUBWAY STATION - DAY

MESHELLE (O.S.)

I fuckin' throw away my life for that asshole, and all I get from him are two bastard children.

At the bottom of the stairs, Joseph turns and sees Meshelle's legs stomping down with the girl's close behind her. The girl stumbles - she would have fallen, had Meshelle's drugs not given her superhuman strength to lift her up.

MESHELLE (CONT'D)

(to girl)

That's right, you a bastard. You know what that means? Means don't nobody want you then and don't nobody want you now.

She hurls the girl over to an empty bench, towering over her.

MESHELLE (CONT'D)

I fuckin' hate my life, and I fuckin' hate you.

She looks at the people waiting for the subway who stare straight ahead. Everybody hears, but nobody wants to see.

MESHELLE (CONT'D)

You can all go to hell! GO TO HELL!

The girl, sitting hunched over with a weight clearly heavier than her little pink backpack, looks at Joseph sitting on the next bench with his hat on his lap.

It's breaking his heart. He looks like he's ready to say something, makes a move to stand up, and then Meshelle screams at him...

MESHELLE (CONT'D)
What you looking at? You too, you
GO TO HELL!

The number 3 train pulls up. Joseph is visibly relieved. Looking again at the girl, he mouths the word "sorry."

The girl never takes her eyes off him as he enters the train, sitting at a seat near the door. She's tragically beautiful, and compassion and sorrow fill Joseph's kind brown eyes.

MESHELLE (CONT'D)
(setting down the boy)
I can't even fuckin' look at you,
you look so much like that mother-
fucker. Look at your fuckin' face,
you'se a goddamn mess.

She reaches into her bag for a Kleenex to wipe his face.

THE GIRL continues to hold Joseph's eyes.

MESHELLE finds a Kleenex, throws her bag on the floor. All her attention is on the boy now.

THE GIRL cocks her head at Joseph, as if she's asking a question.

THE BOY cries from Meshelle's rough treatment of his face.

MESHELLE (CONT'D)
Don't make me slap you, you little
bastard. Sit still.

Joseph tips his head slightly at the girl, as if to answer her question. The funny thing is, he doesn't know what the question is.

He's about to find out.

The subway doors begin to close.

Suddenly, the girl jumps up and bolts to and through the door. Her backpack gets caught but she fiercely yanks it through, and plummets straight into Joseph's lap.

ALL SOUNDS reach a feverish pitch as she runs - her mother screaming, the sounds of the subway, the echoes of her little shoes on the cement, the closing doors.

When she reaches Joseph's arms, the doors close completely.

TOTAL SILENCE.

INT. SUBWAY TRAIN - DAY

Joseph holds the girl, or rather, she holds him. Tight.

He looks up and down the train. A few PASSENGERS briefly look at him, but most make no eye contact.

As the train nears the next stop, Joseph tries to pull the girl away from him to talk to her. She clings even tighter.

At the stop, he stands up to leave, but she fights him, clinging to the pole. If we could hear her, we'd know she was crying out "no no no no."

Now everyone IS looking at him. He is mumbling something, he is confused, he doesn't know what to do, and he is scared. He spins around, then sits back down. The girl relaxes in his arms. The passengers look away.

TIME PASSES. Another stop, another attempt to get out, another repeat of the cycle. He can't take the contemptuous look of the passengers; it's almost like they think HE is the abusive one. And he has no idea how to explain this.

They ride on. At the next stop, he doesn't even try to get off. The girl relaxes. She pulls away, and looks at him. TWO SETS of wounded eyes meet. She embraces him all the tighter. Several FEMALE PASSENGERS who just got on see them and smile.

LATER

They pass through Manhattan into Brooklyn and past Joseph's stop at KINGSTON AVENUE. He remains seated.

STILL LATER

The NEW LOTS AVENUE exit. Sound gradually fades back in. . .

SUBWAY ANNOUNCER (O.S.)

This is the last stop on the number
3 train. All passengers please exit
the train. This is the number 3
train Harlem-bound.

The girl has fallen asleep. Her head starts to fall backward. Joseph takes his large, rough hand and places it gently on her head, securing it in the crook of his neck again.

The train heads back in the opposite direction.

MUCH LATER

The 148th STREET, Harlem exit.

SUBWAY ANNOUNCER (O.S.)
 This is the last stop on the number
 3 train. All passengers please exit
 the train. This is the number 3
 train Brooklyn-bound.

Still she sleeps. When the doors open, Joseph looks for her mother, or the police. Neither appears. The train heads back.

MUCH MUCH LATER

SUBWAY ANNOUNCER (O.S.)
 Kingston Avenue. Next stop, Utica
 Avenue.

Joseph stands up stiffly. The girl awakens a bit, but doesn't fight him. He carries her off the train.

EXT. CROWN HEIGHTS PARK - DAY

Joseph walks up Kingston Avenue carrying the girl. He enters the park, sitting at the first bench he sees.

Across the park, a group of JOSEPH'S FRIENDS see him, do a double-take over the child, and wave him over to their table. He remains seated, shell-shocked, with the girl in his lap.

LATER. The light fades.

The girl sits next to Joseph, backpack still on.

JOSEPH
 Hungry?

She nods. Joseph stands, takes her hand. They walk.

EXT. JOSEPH'S APARTMENT BUILDING - NIGHT

Joseph and the girl walk up the stairs holding hands.

Ida looks out her front window, cocking her head in surprise. Joseph sees her, and quickly looks down.

INT. KITCHEN

The girl sits at the table, backpack still on.

Joseph searches for something suitable to feed her.

JOSEPH
I don't have much I suppose you'd
like.

He takes out some frozen entrees and puts them on the table.

JOSEPH (CONT'D)
Do any of these look good to you?

The girl points to macaroni and cheese.

Joseph smiles, unwraps it, and pops it in the microwave. Waiting, he takes out his wine bottle, pours himself a glass, and downs it. Another quick one before he puts it back.

Spotting her backpack again, he says

JOSEPH (CONT'D)
Here. Let's take this off.

No. She clenches the straps closer to her body.

INT. LIVING ROOM -- LATER THAT NIGHT

The girl sits on the couch, backpack on her lap.

Joseph kneels before her, tenderly.

JOSEPH
What's your name?

Silence.

JOSEPH (CONT'D)
What's your name, baby?

She looks around as do children do when preparing a lie.

GIRL
(quietly)
Mary.

JOSEPH
Mary.
(nodding, beat)
Mary, what's your momma's name?

Her eyes shift again, then light upon her backpack. The answer is inside.

MARY

Mary.

JOSEPH

(not sure he believes her)

Mary. And Mary. Well Mary...

(pained)

I need to take you back home.

She shakes her head in no uncertain terms - no.

JOSEPH (CONT'D)

Your momma will be looking for you.

(beat)

Your momma will be missing you.

No again, more vigorously.

JOSEPH (CONT'D)

You don't want to go home?

No. Definitely not. Tears well up in her eyes.

Joseph takes a deep breath.

JOSEPH (CONT'D)

Then at least we needs to let the
police know where you are.

She shakes her head so vigorously that tears fly from it.

JOSEPH (CONT'D)

Maybe they can find you another
home. A better one.

Her eyes dart around the apartment.

JOSEPH (CONT'D)

Baby, I can't. . . you can't stay
here.

She raises her head, meeting his eyes straight on.

MARY

Why not?

Her wide brown eyes slay him and he is at a loss for words.

INT. LIVING ROOM - LATER THAT NIGHT

Mary sleeps soundly in Joseph's arms. He jostles her a little, realizes she's dead weight. He tries so gently to place her onto the couch when. . .

She wakes up. Not trusting his intentions, she clings to him, repeating

MARY

No no no no no no no.

JOSEPH

Okay baby. Okay. Let me just take you to the bed, okay? Okay?

She assents, picking up her backpack. He carries her to the

BEDROOM

where he tenderly lays her down. He tries to leave, but she clings to him.

JOSEPH (CONT'D)

No, I'm just going to the other room... it's okay, you're okay...

She cries and clings and fights. He's not going anywhere.

He lays down on the bed curled up behind her, making shushing sounds. He holds her; she holds her backpack. She closes her sleepy eyes. His eyes - wide open. He has no idea what to do.

DISSOLVE TO:

BEDROOM - LATER

Joseph and Mary in the exact same position. He gets up from the bed, and tries to remove her backpack from her arms. She fights him, and he leaves it there.

He moves toward the living room, when suddenly he is tackled from behind by Mary, screaming. . .

MARY

No! NO! NOOOO!!

INT. IDA'S APARTMENT

Hearing the screams, Ida mutes another episode featuring another abusive man on "Lifetime." She goes to the window. The lights on the side of the apartment illuminate Joseph's room just enough for her to see he's not there.

Joseph and Mary return and get back into bed. Ida can just make out Joseph lying behind Mary again, holding her in a way that. . . well... it just doesn't seem right to Ida.

INT. JOSEPH'S BEDROOM - MORNING

Joseph wakes. Mary sleeps soundly. He is able to leave the bedroom, walking into the

KITCHEN

where he opens the cupboard, and takes a long pull on the bottle of wine. Setting it down, he walks back to the

BEDROOM

and gently prods Mary, dead asleep. He walks back into the

KITCHEN

and takes another deep drink, grabs his key, and heads toward the front door.

EXT. JOSEPH'S APARTMENT

He walks quickly down the street.

Ida peers at him, scowling, from her front window.

INT. CORNER MARKET

As Joseph enters the market, the owner, a friendly INDIAN MAN, turns down the television news he's been watching.

INDIAN MAN

Yo-seph! What you doing up dis
time'a the morning?? It's too
eaarr--ly, man!

Joseph motions to the television, trying to be casual.

JOSEPH

Any news?

INDIAN MAN

Of course there's news. There's
always news! Good news is no news,
dey say. In this country, all bad
news.

He switches the television off in disgust.

Joseph grabs a NEW YORK TIMES from the stand. He takes it to the counter, then remembers.

JOSEPH

Uh. . . you got any breakfast for kids?

INDIAN MAN

Yo-seph! You up all night making babies with the ladies?

JOSEPH

Seriously, man.

The Indian man gets out from behind the counter, goes over and grabs some pop-tarts.

INDIAN MAN

You gotta toaster?

JOSEPH

Yea. Yea. You think we all so poor we can't afford toasters?

INDIAN MAN

No. No. You just never buy no toastables.

(rings up the paper)

Or no news.

EXT. STREET

Joseph walks quickly, scans the paper, dumping each section in the garbage - nothing about a missing girl in them.

EXT. APARTMENT

Ida hangs out her apartment window, waiting.

IDA

Joseph. Who dat girl you brought here last night?

JOSEPH

(tipping his hat)

Morning Miss Pulley. That was. . .

uh. . .

(think quickly!)

. . . that's my son's girl.

IDA

When your son get a girl that old?
And how come he don't ever bring
her over when he come for
Christmas? And what she doin' here
with you?

JOSEPH

(stunned by the volley)
Uhhh. . . he just got her.

Realizing how stupid he sounds, he points to the pop-tarts.

JOSEPH (CONT'D)

I gotta go, Miss Pulley. I gotta
feed her breakfast.

IDA

You left her 'lone in dere? You
can't leave no child that age
alone. She likely to get in all
sortsa. . .

Joseph ignores her, enters the building. Huffing, Ida pulls
down the window.

INT. APARTMENT BUILDING

Joseph bounds up the stairs, worried, and into the apartment.
Dropping the pop-tarts on the counter in the

KITCHEN

he rushes into the

BEDROOM.

Mary is not in the bed.

Panic.

JOSEPH

Mary?

He bolts to the

BATHROOM

where he frantically pulls back the shower curtain, then into
the

LIVING ROOM

where he looks behind the couch, still calling

JOSEPH
Mary? Mary!

QUICK CUT - to Mary in the closet, shaking, peering out from the very sparse selection of clothes.

JOSEPH (O.S.)
(more frantically)
Mary? Mary!

Joseph enters the bedroom, looks toward the closet, sees her there, animal eyes open wide and wild.

She runs into his arms.

And now he's all heart, holding her, his face revealing every emotion - relief, fear, confusion - and the beginnings of a fierce and protective love.

He sets her down, takes her by the hand.

JOSEPH (CONT'D)
You hungry? Let's have us some
breakfast, baby.

KITCHEN

Mary - with her pink backpack on the table - finishes the pop-tart. Joseph looks at her from across at the table.

JOSEPH
What should we do today?

Big brown eyes - but her mouth remains tight and silent.

JOSEPH (CONT'D)
You want I should take you home?

She nods no. He figured as much. Suddenly, an idea.

JOSEPH (CONT'D)
The park? You wanna go to the
park?

Mary nods vigorously.

EXT. JOSEPH'S APARTMENT - DAY

Joseph and Mary walk down the steps. Ida opens the window.

IDA
How'd your son just get her?

JOSEPH
(prepared this time)
Oh, he just married her momma.

IDA
Why you got her then?

JOSEPH
They on vacation.
(suddenly, a brainstorm)
Honeymoon. They on their honeymoon.

He continues down the street, pleased with himself.

Ida hummphs in disbelief, slams shut the window again.

EXT. CORNER MARKET - DAY

TWO POLICE OFFICERS approach Joseph and Mary as they walk hand in hand.

Joseph looks down, alarmed - and decidedly guilty.

They pass in front of him as they enter the market.

Joseph walks faster. Mary struggles to keep up.

EXT. PARK - DAY

As Joseph and Mary near the park, the patrol car drives by slowly. Joseph looks over. The officers are drinking coffee, laughing. The officer on the passenger side looks at Joseph and Mary and smiles. Joseph tips his hat. They pass on by.

Joseph breathes again.

INT. PARK - DAY

A subdued Joseph pushes a subdued Mary on the swings. He's thinking, hard. Time passes - different kids come and go on the swings next to her.

Joseph sees his friends begin to gather at their usual table.

Later, once half a dozen are assembled, they wave him over, but he just waves them off.

Still later, they send an emissary, PETER, a bleary man who looks like he's been slightly drunk since 1970. By then, Joseph is pushing Mary slowly on the merry-go-round.

They nod at each other in shorthand greeting.

PETER
Who's the girl?

JOSEPH
Mary.

PETER
(laughing)
Okay, brother. I'll play. Who's
Mary?

Joseph pushes the merry-go-round uncomfortably. He'd rather not have to lie to a fellow vet, but. . .

JOSEPH
She's John's girl. My boy's. I have
to watch her for a while. Her
momma. . . she's having some drug
problems. She's gotta get
straightened out.

PETER
And now you have their problem.

JOSEPH
She ain't a problem.

PETER
Man like you with a little girl
like that - that ain't a problem?
What you know 'bout raising a girl?
Shit, you know more about raising a
bottle than raising a girl.

JOSEPH
She'll teach me. She already taught
me she likes macaroni and cheese
and sleeping close at night.

A HOOT from the table interrupts them. A man has whipped a bottle of whiskey out of a bag. Another man grabs it from him, holds it up, lets out a whooping call.

PETER

That call's for me, brother. Gotta take it.

He starts to walk away, then turns back.

PETER (CONT'D)

You need any help, you let me know.

He turns back, chuckling at himself.

Joseph keeps spinning the merry-go-round as he watches Peter join the men. The whiskey is placed back in the bag, and passed around. Some men drink it straight from the bottle, others add it to their cups. These are not Bowery bums, just Vietnam vets still fighting the war within.

Joseph looks at Mary, then back at the men, then back to Mary. In one day, his allegiances have changed.

JOSEPH

Let's try the slide, huh?

INT. APARTMENT - DAY

Back from the park. Joseph throws his sweater on the couch.

JOSEPH

Mac and cheese again?

Mary follows suit, throwing her backpack onto the couch.

Joseph looks at the backpack. Mary sees him, and goes over to it protectively.

Sensing his opportunity, Joseph sits down on the couch.

JOSEPH

That's a pretty pack. Bring it here and lemme see what it says on the outside.

She complies, though hesitatingly.

JOSEPH (CONT'D)

Barbie. Is that girl there Barbie?

Mary nods.

JOSEPH (CONT'D)

Humm. . . Can you show me what you gots inside?

Mary nods, albeit tentatively. Her little fingers unzip the backpack. As she takes out each item, she hands it to him.

First - a worn sweater.

JOSEPH (CONT'D)
Oh. For when it's cold.

She nods. She pulls out a folded piece of paper she has drawn on, and a nubby pencil.

JOSEPH (CONT'D)
Did you draw this? Can I see?

She nods. He unfolds the paper. A drawing of an angel.

JOSEPH (CONT'D)
A pretty angel. Like you.

He points to the word "Angel" on her shirt.

She pulls out a piece of sidewalk chalk.

JOSEPH (CONT'D)
Some chalk. To do your schoolwork?

Mary shakes her head no.

JOSEPH (CONT'D)
Oh, just to draw with then.

Yes. That's all she wants to show him. Sensing there's something more inside, he pushes.

JOSEPH (CONT'D)
What else you got in there?

She slowly pulls out her most prized possession. It's a two inch figurine of the Virgin Mary. She doesn't hand it over.

JOSEPH (CONT'D)
Who's that? Is that your doll?

Mary nods her head no.

JOSEPH (CONT'D)
Who is it then?

MARY
(quietly and reverently)
It's Mother Mary.

JOSEPH
Ohhhh. She's pretty.

Mary nods, then pulls out a package of Kleenex and hands it to him. She drops her backpack - that's it.

JOSEPH (CONT'D)
And Kleenex. For when you have a runny nose.

Mary shakes her head no again.

JOSEPH (CONT'D)
No? What for, then?

Mary takes back the Kleenex. She sets it on the coffee table, then gently lays the Virgin Mary into the plastic folds of the opening.

JOSEPH (CONT'D)
That's Mary's bed!

Mary nods, almost breaking into a smile.

Joseph sees it and runs with it. He glances at his worktable in the b.g. He gestures to it.

JOSEPH (CONT'D)
Would you like it if I built Mary a real bed?

Mary nods. That half-smile again.

LIVING ROOM - LATER

All the helicopters have been pushed to the end of the table.

Joseph concentrates on making the Virgin Mary a bed.

Mary stands next to the table, her wide-eyes at sight level. The Virgin looks larger than her 2 inches as she stands in front of Mary's line of vision.

BEDROOM - NIGHT

Joseph sits on the bed, Mary standing beside him. On the nightstand, he places the carefully carved doll bed.

Mary places the Virgin Mary on it.

Joseph pulls a Kleenex out of the package, gently placing it over her like a sheet.

That done, he pats the bed for Mary to get in. She does, but when he tries to leave the room, she clings to his arm and whimpers her fear. Joseph sighs, giving in.

JOSEPH

Okay.

He stands up, sees Ida in the window. He takes a piece of cardboard that has fallen on the floor, and tries to re-tape it to the window like a curtain.

The cardboard holds until he gets into the bed beside Mary and closes his eyes, then it falls again, exposing them to Ida's prying eyes. She shakes her head in disgust.

EXT. JOSEPH'S APARTMENT - DAY

This morning, Joseph takes Mary with him to buy a newspaper.

INT. CORNER MARKET

INDIAN MAN

Is dees your girl? The pop-tart girl?

Joseph nods, pays for the paper.

INDIAN MAN (CONT'D)

Hullo, pop-tart girl! Hullo!

Mary says nothing, clinging to Joseph's hand.

EXT. JOSEPH'S APARTMENT - DAY

Ida hangs out the window, waiting their return.

IDA

Girl. Girl! What's your name, girl?

No answer. Ida scares Mary. Hell, Ida scares everybody.

IDA (CONT'D)

Where's your momma and your daddy?

No answer again. Ida turns to Joseph.

IDA (CONT'D)

Joseph. It's not right for a grown man to be sleeping with a little girl her age. It's not right.

JOSEPH
 (tipping his hat)
 Mornin', Miss Pulley.

He enters the building.

IDA
 It's not right. It's a per-VERSITY!

EXT. PARK - DAY

Mary, looking a bit more animated, is pushed on the swings by Joseph, who nervously eyes a patrol car driving by the park.

INT. BEDROOM - NIGHT

Joseph tapes the cardboard up to the window with fresh tape.

Mary puts the Virgin Mary into the bed. Joseph comes over to the bed, and covers her with the Kleenex sheet.

Mary gets into bed. There is comfort already in this routine.

JOSEPH
 (to the Virgin)
 Good night Mary.
 (to Mary)
 Good night Mary.

The cardboard falls off.

Mary tugs Joseph toward the bed. This time, he resists.

JOSEPH (CONT'D)
 No, Mary, it's best you sleep
 alone.

MARY
 NO! I don't want to!

This loud cry brings Ida to the window.

JOSEPH
 Yes, baby. It don't look right for
 me to be sleepin' with you.

Mary cries loudly, working up a tantrum.

Joseph leans over her, trying to comfort her.

FROM IDA'S POV - is Joseph trying to kiss the girl?

JOSEPH (CONT'D)

(quietly)

Mary, Mary, listen, I'll just be on the couch, right out there. Listen. I'll keep the door open. I'll just be on the couch.

MARY

No! Don't! No!

She tries to get out of bed. Joseph panics, holds her down.

JOSEPH

Baby, you have to stay here. You have to. . .

(fighting her)

. . . stay. . . here.

MARY

(screaming)

I don' want to. I don' want to.

FROM IDA'S POV - the struggle looks. . . like a perversity.

Joseph turns around and sees Ida. He stands up, tries to cover the window again, but this makes it look worse. The cardboard falls, and Ida sees Mary crying, running into the living room.

Ida picks up the phone.

INT. LIVING ROOM - A LITTLE LATER

Joseph sleeps behind Mary on the couch. Both are startled awake by a knock on the door.

JOSEPH

Who is it?

MAN'S VOICE (O.S.)

Brooklyn Police.

Sheer panic on Joseph's face.

Mary runs into the bedroom and hides in the closet.

Joseph opens the door. A young SERIOUS OFFICER enters first, followed by an older FATHERLY OFFICER.

SERIOUS OFFICER

We received a concerned call from a neighbor.

His partner peers around the apartment.

FATHERLY OFFICER
Do you have a little girl in here?

When Joseph nods. . .

FATHERLY OFFICER (CONT'D)
Where is she?

JOSEPH
She got scared. She ran into the
bedroom. I'll go get her.

He makes a move for the bedroom, but the officer stops him.

FATHERLY OFFICER
That's okay. If you don't mind, I'd
like to talk to her alone.

The officer walks into the bedroom.

SERIOUS OFFICER
(motioning to the couch)
Have a seat.

Joseph moves a blanket over, and sits down. The officer sits
on the edge of a chair across from him.

SERIOUS OFFICER (CONT'D)
Your neighbor says a little girl
came to live with you two days ago?

JOSEPH
That's right.
(too quickly)
She's my son's girl. Mary.

SERIOUS OFFICER
Why's she staying with you?

JOSEPH
My son and his new wife, they
having some problems. I'm taking
care of their girl 'til they sort
'em out.

SERIOUS OFFICER
So she's your granddaughter.

He removes a pad from his pocket, taking notes.

Joseph's never thought of her this way before, but it seems
correct. He nods.

SERIOUS OFFICER (CONT'D)
Your neighbor told us you told her
the girl was staying with you
during their honeymoon.

JOSEPH
(fidgeting)
Yea. I told her that.

SERIOUS OFFICER
Is that correct?
(when Joseph doesn't
answer)
They having problems on their
honeymoon?

JOSEPH
No. Not exactly.

He looks down at his hands, lights on a partial truth.

JOSEPH
You see, the girl's momma's been
having some drug problems. She
hasn't been treating the girl too
right. My son brought her to me to
take care of 'til it's safe for her
to go back home.

SERIOUS OFFICER
So why'd you lie to your neighbor?

JOSEPH
(thinking, and then..)
Miss Pulley, she a good lady, but
she got a judgmental streak a mile
wide.

The officer half-smiles, nods. Joseph looks toward the
bedroom door.

JOSEPH (CONT'D)
She's probably scared to death.
Can't I go in?

SERIOUS OFFICER
He'll call you if he needs you. So
your son and his wife, where do
they live?

JOSEPH
In D.C.
(proudly)
My son's a lawyer there.

SERIOUS OFFICER
Would you mind if we called him?

He sees the panic cross Joseph's face.

SERIOUS OFFICER (CONT'D)
Is that a problem?

JOSEPH
(recovering)
No, no. It's just that I got no
phone.

SERIOUS OFFICER
We'll call him.

JOSEPH
Sure. But they won't be there right
now. Him and his wife, they went
somewhere for her to recover.

SERIOUS OFFICER
They must have left you a number
where they can be reached. In case
there's any problem with the girl.

JOSEPH
No. There's no number.
(beat)
I mean, no, they didn't know the
number yet, but they's gonna call
me as soon as they do. I mean,
they's gonna call my friend - my
friend Peter - and he's gonna get
it to me.

The officer is skeptical, but Joseph seems harmless. He takes
out his card, hands it to Joseph.

SERIOUS OFFICER
My number's here. Call as soon as
you get theirs.

JOSEPH
I will. I'll call you from Peter's
after they call Peter. That's
right.

Serious Officer walks to the

BEDROOM

and sees Fatherly Officer sitting on the bed beside a very
shaken Mary. He stands, goes over to his partner.

FATHERLY OFFICER

Some old bruises - she says they're from her mother.

SERIOUS OFFICER

He's the grandfather - says Mom's a druggie, and that the girl's staying with him while she gets straightened out.

(motioning to the girl)

Nothing else?

FATHERLY OFFICER

Nothing. She says he doesn't hurt her or touch her wrong. She nodded when I asked if they sleep together, but I don't get the feeling anything's going on.

SERIOUS OFFICER

You and your feelings. . . shit. Bad as a woman.

He smiles and walks back into the

LIVING ROOM

SERIOUS OFFICER

Mister???

JOSEPH

Johnson. Joseph Johnson. Sir.

SERIOUS OFFICER

Mr. Johnson, your neighbor said you been sharing a bed with your granddaughter. Guess she didn't like the way that looked.

JOSEPH

Officer, I tried to get her to sleep by herself, but she wants me there. She cries, pulls me to her. She even followed me out here

(to the makeshift bed on the couch)

To sleep with me. I just think she's scared, maybe lonely. On account of her momma and all.

Serious Officer nods. He walks into the

KITCHEN where he sees...

the WINE BOTTLE. He picks it up, tilts it over. Nearly empty.
He walks into the

BEDROOM

where Mary sits on the bed. His partner is looking out of
Joseph's window at Ida in her apartment looking at him. He
motions for them to go. They walk into the

LIVING ROOM and to the front door.

SERIOUS OFFICER

You call us at that number when you
hear from your son.

JOSEPH

Yes sir.

FATHERLY OFFICER

You understand that if your
daughter-in-law continues drugging
and abusing that girl, the D.C.
police are gonna to have to take
her away?

JOSEPH

Yes sir.

FATHERLY OFFICER

If I were you, I'd try to keep her
here for a while. This is probably
the safest place for her. She seems
real attached to you.

JOSEPH

(trying not to, he smiles)
Yes sir.

SERIOUS OFFICER

Just be careful of your neighbor,
Mr. Johnson. She's one of our
habituals. Get some curtains or
something.

JOSEPH

Habituals, sir?

SERIOUS OFFICER

Habitual caller. Always suspicious
about something. Notices
everything. Someone takes a leak on
the sidewalk, she calls.

FATHERLY OFFICER

Wants to know if we can do a DNA
test on urine!

SERIOUS OFFICER

Someone goes through the garbage,
she calls, wants us to fingerprint.
Any man looks at her funny, she
calls in a potential rapist.

FATHERLY OFFICER

Lots of rapists in this
neighborhood, according to her!

A manly exchange of laughter. Fatherly Officer turns serious.

FATHERLY OFFICER

But listen, every time she calls us
about you and that little girl, we
gotta take her seriously. Enough
calls about abuse, and they'll send
out someone from Child Protective
Services. You don't want that to
happen. So be careful.

JOSEPH

Thank you. Thank you, Officers.

FATHERLY OFFICER

Have a happy Thanksgiving.

Joseph goes to tip his hat to them, but doesn't have one on.
He shuts the door, and sighs deeply. He walks into the

BEDROOM

When Ida sees him, she pulls her curtain down.

Joseph approaches Mary sitting on the bed, head hung low. He
kneels before her, lifts her head, and holds her eyes.

MARY

Can I stay?

Joseph sighs deeply. Feels like he's been holding his breath
for days.

JOSEPH

You can stay.

He puts his arms around her. HER FACE - a huge smile. HIS
FACE - not as confident as he sounds. He repeats

JOSEPH (CONT'D)

You can stay.

And pulls her closer to him, wanting it to be true.

MONTAGE:

Over several days:

Joseph and Mary at the park. Joseph's clothes change, but Mary's do not.

Sleeping on the couch, uncomfortably.

Buying macaroni and cheese and pop-tarts and two frozen turkey dinners.

Eating the turkey dinners on Thanksgiving.

Walking back from the laundromat. Mary wears a shirt of Joseph's with a belt tied around it.

Joseph making more doll furniture for the Virgin Mary.

Joseph tacking up a pillow case over the window.

Joseph and Mary sleeping in the bed again.

INT. JOSEPH'S APARTMENT - MORNING

While Joseph sleeps, Mary plays with the Virgin Mary on the furniture. She drops her, and looks under the bed. She pulls out a magazine with a naked black woman on the cover.

Joseph wakes to find her thumbing through it, a curious expression on her face.

JOSEPH

(sitting up quickly)

What you doin'?

MARY

(with deadpan innocence)

Readin'.

JOSEPH

(snatching the magazine)

You can read?

His ignorance meets her innocence. She nods like "of course."

JOSEPH (CONT'D)

You like reading?
 (when Mary nods)
 Then let's go get you some proper
 readin' material.

EXT. JOSEPH'S APARTMENT - LATER

Ida comes up her steps with groceries in hand as Joseph and Mary go down theirs.

IDA

You need to get that girl in
 school, Joseph. And get her a
 change of clothes.

Joseph smiles, and tips his hat.

JOSEPH AND MARY

(together)
 Mornin' Miss Pulley.

Joseph - surprised that Mary spoke - picks her up and swings her around. His laughter is infectious, and Mary laughs for the first time.

EXT. BROOKLYN LIBRARY - DAY

Right outside the entrance to the children's section, there is a playground. Mary sees it, and tugs Joseph toward it. He is a man on a mission, however, and won't be distracted.

INT. BROOKLYN LIBRARY - CHILDREN'S SECTION

Joseph sits squeezed into a tiny chair with a pile of books in his lap.

Mary, smiling, keeps loading on more.

Joseph tips back and pretends he's going to fall - and then actually does. All the LIBRARY PATRONS stare, while Mary and Joseph laugh, try to stifle their laughter, then laugh even more. The floodgates are open, and for both, there is joy.

INT. LIBRARY - CHECK OUT COUNTER

Mary sits on the counter as Joseph fills out the BROOKLYN LIBRARY APPLICATION FORM.

JOSEPH
First name? Mary.

She smiles.

JOSEPH (CONT'D)
Last name?

He looks at her, puzzled. She won't look at him.

JOSEPH (CONT'D)
Last name. Hummm. . .

She still won't look at him.

JOSEPH (CONT'D)
(knocking softly on her
forehead)
Knock knock.
(he replies to himself in
falsetto)
Who's there?

Mary looks up, interested in this game.

JOSEPH (CONT'D)
Mary.
(in falsetto)
Mary who?

Mary looks down. She's onto him.

JOSEPH (CONT'D)
Well, if you won't give me your
last name, I'll have to give you
one myself. How 'bout Mary. . .

He looks around, spies a book in their pile with a poodle on
the cover.

JOSEPH (CONT'D)
Mary Poodlehead.

Mary still looks down, but smiles and shakes her head no.

JOSEPH (CONT'D)
Okay, she don't like that one. How
'bout Mary. . .
(spying a little boy
picking his nose)
. . . Mary Nosepicker?

Mary giggles, but shakes her head no.

JOSEPH (CONT'D)
 This gal is sure'nuff tough to
 please. How bout Mary. . .
 (spying a large woman with
 an even larger behind)
 Mary Shakeyourbootie?

MARY
 (laughing)
 No!

Her face turns serious.

MARY (CONT'D)
 What's your last name?

JOSEPH
 Johnson. I'm Joseph Johnson
 (putting out his hand)
 Pleased to meet ya, Mary...??

MARY
 (quietly)
 Johnson.

She shakes his hand. His face can't hide his pleasure.

JOSEPH
 Mary Johnson it is.
 (turning back to the form)
 Last name Johnson.

INT. SUBWAY TRAIN - DAY

Mary looks through some books. Joseph is deep in thought.

SUBWAY ANNOUNCER (O.S.)
 Flushing Avenue.

Joseph looks down at Mary. He has to do this.

JOSEPH
 Mary, we gotta get off here. I
 gotta do something real fast.

EXT. BROOKLYN BROWNSTONE - DAY

Next door to Tyrone's house, Joseph sets down the stack of
 library books, motions to Mary to sit on them.

JOSEPH

I need you to wait here.

(when she protests)

I have to talk to a man in that house about something. He's not a nice man, baby. So you wait here, okay?

He walks to Tyrone's house. Turning to look back at Mary, and seeing her looking so nervous, he wiggles his bootie at her. She laughs. He knocks on the door, shakes while he waits.

Tyrone opens the door.

TYRONE

What the hell you doin' here? It's Saturday, dickhead.

He slams shut the door.

Joseph knocks again. Tyrone opens it, pissed off.

JOSEPH

Tyrone, listen, I can't work for you no more. I'm sorry, but. . .

TYRONE

Why the hell not?

He eyes Joseph suspiciously. He takes a step down from the house until he is at Joseph's level. Slightly taller than him, he gets right in Joseph's face.

TYRONE (CONT'D)

(menacingly)

I said why the hell not?

JOSEPH

It's just...it's just that...

Tyrone gets even closer.

JOSEPH (CONT'D)

It's just that I got something else I gotta do on Sundays now.

TYRONE

Did you get religion, Joseph?

(poking him in the chest

with his middle finger)

You better tell me you got the kind of religion that makes you keep your fuckin' mouth shut.

Yes, that's it. Joseph nods his head.

TYRONE (CONT'D)
 Because if you get born-again
 around the fuckin' police and so
 much as mention my name, I will
 send you to hell so fast no
 preacher can save you.

He pokes Joseph so hard he stumbles down a step.

TYRONE (CONT'D)
 You understand?
 (poking him down another
 step)
 You understand. Now get the fuck
 outta here.

Joseph walks away.

Tyrone goes up to the door, then spins around, yelling...

TYRONE (CONT'D)
 Say hey to Jesus for me, willya
 Joseph?

Joseph walks on.

TYRONE
 (to himself)
 Say hey to Jesus.

EXT. CROWN HEIGHTS STREET - DAY

Joseph carries the stack of books. They pass OUR MOTHER OF PEACE church where they see TWO LARGE BLACK WOMEN in their 50's exiting. Mary points to a statue of the Virgin Mary by the entrance.

MARY
 Mary!

JOSEPH
 Why, yes it is. But she's too big
 to fit in that ole' doll bed of
 yours.

The two black women smile, and Joseph tips his hat to them.

They pass by the building next to the church - a school.
 Joseph stops.

JOSEPH (CONT'D)
 You know, if you're gonna stay with
 me, you needs to be in school.

Mary looks at the school, then back to the Mary statue.

JOSEPH (CONT'D)
 This one looks plenty nice.

Mary walks on.

JOSEPH (CONT'D)
 Maybe tomorrow, okay?

Her little shoulders shrug. He smiles, clearly enchanted.

INT. JOSEPH'S KITCHEN - NIGHT

Joseph finishes washing the dishes, while Mary is in the

LIVING ROOM

with her library books spread out all over the floor.

JOSEPH (O.S.)
 Pick one out, baby, and I'll read
 it to you soon as I finishes.

Mary scans the books, then picks up "Are You My Mother?" and
 brings it into Joseph in the

KITCHEN.

She tugs at his shirt, then holds the book up.

JOSEPH
 That one? Okay.

He folds the dish towel and sets in on the counter.

INT. JOSEPH'S BEDROOM

Mary's head is on Joseph's shoulder. She holds the Virgin
 statue in her hand.

JOSEPH
 (reading)
 "Where am I?" said the baby bird.
 "I want to go home! I want my
 mother!"

Then something happened. The Snort put that baby bird right back in the tree. The baby bird was home!

Just then the mother bird came back to the tree. "Do you know who I am?" she said to her baby.

"Yes, I know who you are," said the baby bird. "You are not a kitten. You are not a hen. You are not a dog. You are not a cow. You are not a boat, or a plane, or a Snort! You are a bird, and you are my mother."

Joseph closes the book, then looks at Mary with both concern and tenderness. He kisses the top of her head.

JOSEPH (CONT'D)

Do you ever want to go home?

MARY

I like THIS home.

JOSEPH

Do you ever miss your mother?

Mary lifts up the Virgin, and makes her shake her head no.

JOSEPH (CONT'D)

What about your father?

MARY

(mimicking her mother's
tone of voice through the
Virgin Mary)

"Your daddy is dead to you. Don't ask about that prick again or I will beat your butt."

As quickly as she hardened, she softens again. She reaches up to Joseph, strokes his face, unshaven since he quit "going to church" on Sundays. Then, out of the blue. . .

MARY

I would like to sell lem'nade.

JOSEPH

Lem'nade?

MARY

Like on the tv. Like the white girls do.

JOSEPH

Okay, angel. Tomorrow let's sell us some lemonade.

I/E. CORNER MARKET - MORNING

They near the store, Mary with a new lightness in her step.

MARY

We have to get leeee...mons...

JOSEPH

Uh-huh.

He's grinning. She's talking in the sing-song way of happy kids.

MARY

And shuuuu...gar.

JOSEPH

Uh-huh.

MARY

(definitively)
And a box.

JOSEPH

A box? What for?

MARY

To hold all the money, you dumb-shit!

She says it so innocently that Joseph doesn't know how to react. A WOMAN CUSTOMER walks out of the store at that exact moment, flipping him a disapproving look.

They enter the store.

INDIAN MAN

Mary! And Yo-seph! Out of pop-tarts already?

MINUTES LATER

Joseph and Mary exit the store with a bag of supplies - and, a small cigar box.

EXT. PARK - DAY

Mary sits at a table selling lemonade. Most of her customers are black women and their children. Joseph's friends watch from a distance, laughing.

LATER, Joseph's friends approach.

PETER
(coolly)
What up, 'Seph?

JOSEPH
What up, Peter.

MARY
(in full charm mode)
Wouldya like to buy some lem'nade?
Ten cents. Nice an' swwww...eet!

Joseph's friends laugh, instantly won over.

FRIEND ONE
We was jealous cuz you don't wanna
play wit' us no more, but now we
sees why!

FRIEND TWO
Hey, little angel, I'll have me a
cup of that lem'nade.

He pulls a dime out of his pocket. All the friends follow suit, tossing dimes in the box. Mary has hit the jackpot!

Music plays over the scene. The men joke with Joseph, tease Mary, recruit customers from the street. Several of the men turn around and pour their alcohol into their lemonade.

Mary reigns over it all like a queen.

Joseph is in heaven.

Ida walks by, takes in the scene, and scowls.

PETER
What's matter, Miz Pulley? Too
poor to buy yourself a pour?

Ida hummphs, then pulls out her clutch purse and gives Mary a dime. Mary pushes a glass of lemonade toward Ida.

While Ida puts her clutch back, one of Joseph's friends substitutes his alcoholic drink for hers. Everyone sees but Joseph.

Ida picks up her lemonade and takes a long drink. When the alcohol starts to burn, she turns and spews it out - all over Joseph.

The men laugh hysterically.

Ida storms off.

LATER

Joseph's friends cut capers, making Joseph and Mary laugh. Until. . .

FRIEND THREE
(under his breath)
Copsssss...

In the b.g., two police officers approach - the same ones that visited Joseph's house that night.

Most of Joseph's friends slowly walk back to their table.

SERIOUS OFFICER
Mr. Johnson.

He signals for Joseph to move away from Mary and come to him.

Fatherly Officer goes to Mary.

CROSS-CUTTING between the two conversations.

FATHERLY OFFICER
Hey Mary.

MARY
(shyly)
Hey.

SERIOUS OFFICER
(taking out his notepad)
You were going to call us with your
son's phone number.

When Joseph says nothing, he continues.

SERIOUS OFFICER (CONT'D)
Your son was going to leave his
number with
(looking at notepad)
Peter . .

FATHERLY OFFICER

(to Mary)

Can I buy some of that lemonade
from you? It sure sounds good.

Mary pours him some lemonade. He smells it, then takes a
small drink.

JOSEPH

That's right.

Stalling for time, he calls for

JOSEPH

Peter!

Peter hanging off at the edge of the scene, comes forward.

FATHERLY OFFICER

(taking a long hit of
lemonade)

Excellent lemonade, Mary! Best
I've ever had. Thank you, ma'am.

She smiles shyly.

He walks up to his partner.

JOSEPH

(to Peter)

My son. . . you know, remember how
my son called you and left you his
in case of emergencies number?

PETER

(catching on)

That's right.

JOSEPH

I was supposed to give it to these
here officers so they could check
in and make sure all is right in
the situation.

FATHERLY OFFICER

(to his partner, about the
lemonade)

It's clean.

SERIOUS OFFICER

(nodding, then to Peter)

If you give me your number, I'll
call and get theirs from you.

Peter shoots Joseph a look, most displeased.

PETER

Uh, my phone don't work no more.
It's shut off, on account of I
can't pay my bill.

JOSEPH

(quickly adds)
It just got shut off, after he got
the call. That's why we couldn't
call you.

SERIOUS OFFICER

Then your address please.

While Peter gives it to him, his partner takes Joseph aside.

FATHERLY OFFICER

These men your friends?
(Joseph nods yes)
You a drinker too?

JOSEPH

No sir. Not no more, sir.

FATHERLY OFFICER

Good. Look, Joseph. . . these are
not the kind of folks you want your
granddaughter hanging around with.
In fact, if she's gonna be here
much longer, the law says you gotta
get her in school. Next time I see
you during the day, I want to see
you without her. . . and away from
them.

Joseph looks to his friends. Peter heads to join them, but
not before shooting one glaring look back at Joseph.

INT. JOSEPH'S KITCHEN - NIGHT

Mary counts her money at the table, while Joseph microwaves
another frozen meal.

MARY

Thirteen, fourteen, four-ty, fif-
ty, fif...teen. . .

JOSEPH

(setting down Mary's food)
Sixteen. . .

MARY
 (needing no help)
 Sixty. . .

JOSEPH
 Mary.

She looks up, stops pushing her dimes around.

JOSEPH (CONT'D)
 If you're gonna stay here, you need
 to go to school, baby.

If there's anything she wants, it's to stay there. She nods.

MARY
 Can I go to the Mary school?

EXT. JOSEPH'S APARTMENT - DAY

Ubiquitous Ida leans out the window again as Mary and Joseph exit the apartment.

IDA
 For God's sake Joseph. You oughta
 change that girl's clothes by now.
 Didn't her mommma and her daddy
 pack her a suitcase? It ain't
 right, not changin' her clothes.

EXT. OUR MOTHER OF PEACE CHURCH - DAY

Mary looks up at the statue of the Virgin Mary guarding the church.

MARY
 Good morning Mary! I'm going to
 your school!

Joseph smiles. They walk up the steps and enter the school next door.

INT. PS 40 - OFFICE

A SECRETARY stands on a step-ladder hanging Christmas lights with stick pins. She sizes Joseph up by literally looking down at him. She's a hard-ass, take-no-nonsense white Brooklynite, intimidating as hell.

SECRETARY
 (stick pin in mouth)
 Um-hum?

JOSEPH
 My girl. . . Mary here. . . she
 needs to go to school.

Mary, nervous now too, clings closely to Joseph's leg.

SECRETARY
 (removing pin from her
 mouth)
 I see. And how old are you?

She stabs the pin in the wall.

JOSEPH
 Fifty-eigh.

Climbing down the ladder, she points to Mary.

SECRETARY
 Her. How old is she?

JOSEPH
 Oh, Mary, she's. . . she's. . .

He freezes. The secretary goes to her desk, giving him a long disapproving look.

SECRETARY
 You don't know how old she is?

MARY
 (from behind his pants)
 I'm six.

SECRETARY
 Grade?

Joseph is still frozen. The secretary opens a desk drawer.

SECRETARY (CONT'D)
 Her grade. At her prior school.

JOSEPH
 Oh. She got a good grade. She's
 real smart. She can read and. . .

MARY
 (interrupting)
 First grade.

JOSEPH

Oh, yes. First grade, that's right.

The secretary looks suspicious - and annoyed. She pulls a paper out of the drawer, slams it shut, making Joseph jump.

SECRETARY

And where was that at?

(after a pause, tersely)

Where was she previously enrolled?

Joseph waits for Mary to answer. She doesn't. The secretary taps the end of her pen on the desk.

JOSEPH

At a school in Washington D.C.

SECRETARY

(shoving the paper back in
the drawer)

Look, we can't. . .

JOSEPH

(quickly now)

Ma'am, I don't know the name of it,
or a lot of answers to your
questions. Mary, well, she's new to
me. . .

(in sotto voce)

Her mother. . . she can't take care
of her right now, so she's staying
with me.

SECRETARY

And you are her. . .

JOSEPH

Her grandfather.

She takes the paper out of the drawer, and hands it to him.

A LIST OF DOCUMENTS needed: Birth Certificate, Immunization
Records, Social Security Card.

Joseph is unnerved.

Mary peeks out at the secretary from behind Joseph's legs.
The secretary's fake smile sends Mary back into hiding.

SECRETARY (CONT'D)

(back to Joseph)

Is there a problem?

The principal, MRS. WHITMAN, enters. As she crosses the office to another behind it, she takes in the scene.

JOSEPH
 (continuing, shaking his
 head)
 I don't have any of these.

SECRETARY
 Well you'll have to get them from
 your daughter before we can enroll
 your granddaughter. At the least
 we'll need the name of her school
 so we can contact them for copies.

He is dismissed. The secretary climbs back on her ladder.

Mrs. Whitman returns, sans purse, and kneels before Mary.

MRS. WHITMAN
 Hello there.
 (touching the word "Angel"
 on Mary's shirt)
 What's your name, angel?

MARY
 Mary.

SECRETARY
 (turning, seeing that
 Joseph hasn't left)
 Is there something else? There's
 nothing we can do for you today.

Having a henchman who will enforce all rules and regulations allows the principal to play good cop once in a while.

MRS. WHITMAN
 Now we're not going to turn this
 child away from the inn because of
 a little paperwork problem, are we?

She pats Mary on the head, and shakes Joseph's hand.

MRS. WHITMAN (CONT'D)
 I'm the principal, Dotty Whitman.
 When can you get the forms for us?

JOSEPH
 Uhh. . . well. . . her mother, she
 might not be home for a while.
 She's had to go. . .

MRS. WHITMAN
 (kindly saving him)
 Can you get them sometime before
 Christmas? We can enroll this
 precious child on a special waiver
 if you promise us you'll have them
 by then.

Joseph nods affirmatively. What else can he do?

The principal leans down to Mary's level.

MRS. WHITMAN (CONT'D)
 First grade, honey?
 (when Mary nods)
 I thought so. I have just the right
 teacher for you!

INT. HALLWAY - DAY

Mrs. Whitman holds Mary's hand as they walk down the hall.

MRS. WHITMAN
 Her name is Miss Luna and she's
 very special!

She opens a classroom door. Mary and Joseph peer inside.

MARY sees an attractive, vibrant Hispanic woman in her late twenties, MISS LUNA, kneeling down helping a child with math. She looks up at Mary and gives her a huge smile.

INT. CLASSROOM - DAY

Miss Luna shows Mary and Joseph around the room.

MISS LUNA
 And this is where you put your
 backpack in the morning.

Mary takes hers off and puts it in the cubby.

MISS LUNA (CONT'D)
 Perfect! And this is our class pet
 Juana the Iguana.
 (leaning in)
 Juana, this is our new student
 Mary.

The iguana moves closer to the front of the cage.

MISS LUNA (CONT'D)
She likes you, Mary!

She stands up and turns to Joseph.

MISS LUNA (CONT'D)
School ends at 2:20, and you can
pick her up on the front steps
then.

JOSEPH
Oh. Yea. Sure.

It dawns on him that he'll actually have to leave her for the
first time. He kneels down.

JOSEPH (CONT'D)
You be a good girl, you hear?

He stands up, then leans back down and awkwardly kisses Mary
on the cheek.

JOSEPH (CONT'D)
Bye then.

He starts to walk away, but Mary grabs his hand.

JOSEPH (CONT'D)
Mary, I'll be back for you at 2:20.
I promise.

No. She won't let him leave. Fat tears well up in her eyes,
and her bottom lip juts out.

Seeing his pained face as well, Miss Luna steps in.

MISS LUNA
Well, I have an idea. Why doesn't
your grandfather stay here today
and be our parent volunteer?
There's plenty of work I could use
help with.

Both Mary and Joseph break into smiles.

SERIES OF SHOTS

Joseph

- A) Reading a book to a small group of children
- C) Changing Juana the Iguana's water
- D) Meticulously grading math worksheets

E) Cutting yarn into matching pieces

F) On the playground turning the jump-rope with Mary for a LITTLE GIRL.

G) Smiling as he watches the LITTLE GIRL take Mary's hand and walk with her back into the classroom.

EXT. PS 40 - DAY

Mary and Joseph walk down the steps of the school and wave goodbye to the Virgin statue at the church next door.

MATCH CUT TO:

EXT. PS 40 - THE NEXT DAY

Mary and Joseph wave hello to the Virgin and enter the school.

INT. CLASSROOM - DAY

TWO BOYS chase each other with their hands out like they're airplanes. One of them bumps into Miss Luna as she walks across the bustling classroom toward Joseph and Mary. She rolls her eyes, slightly exasperated and overwhelmed.

MISS LUNA

Welcome back Mary!

(leading her away, then
over her shoulder to
Joseph)

We'll see you this afternoon, Mr.
Johnson.

(back to Mary)

I want to show you what Juana is
doing right now. . .

The two airplane-boys run between Joseph and Miss Luna as he moves toward her.

JOSEPH

Uh, Miss Luna? I was wonderin' if
you was in need of a parent
volunteer again today?

Miss Luna looks around at the chaos, and nods.

EXT. PS 40 - DAY

Mary and Joseph walk down the steps of the school and wave goodbye to the Virgin statue.

MATCH CUT TO:

EXT. PS 40 - THE NEXT DAY

Mary and Joseph wave hello to the Virgin and enter the school, passing the same two black women they saw before.

INT. CLASSROOM - DAY

As Mary puts her backpack away and Joseph takes off his sweater, Miss Luna walks up, looking concerned.

MISS LUNA

Mr. Johnson. . .

JOSEPH

(confidently, all smiles)
I would like to volunteer to be
your permanent parent volunteer.

She shakes her head no, starts to speak, but he interrupts.

JOSEPH (CONT'D)

I'm on military disability - I
don't have a job - and I like
coming here and helpin' - it makes
me feel. . . useful. Like I'm doing
something for Mary.

Miss Luna takes his arm and leads him into the

HALLWAY

where she closes the classroom door behind her.

MISS LUNA

Mr. Johnson, I appreciate your
offer, I really do - and God knows
I could use the help - but really,
it's not good for Mary for you to
be here every day.

He looks at her quizzically.

MISS LUNA (CONT'D)

Mary is at that age where she needs to establish some independence.

(reassuringly)

All the children are. That's part of what school is for at this age.

Joseph looks down, dejected.

MISS LUNA (CONT'D)

But that doesn't mean you can't be doing things for Mary during the day.

He looks up.

MISS LUNA (CONT'D)

Yes, there's all sorts of things you can do. Do you cook?

JOSEPH

Not really. Mary just likes macaroni and cheese and pop-tarts anyway.

MISS LUNA

Well, you can learn to cook, make healthy and balanced meals for Mary.

(to his blank look)

The public library is full of cookbooks that will show you how.

He nods his head. He could do that.

MISS LUNA (CONT'D)

Do you read?

JOSEPH

I read Mary some books we got from the library.

MISS LUNA

That's good, but studies also show that the more parents read themselves, and the more books they have in the home, the better their children will read. So you could do that.

She touches him gently on the arm with encouragement.

MISS LUNA (CONT'D)

You could find places to take Mary after school - the Botanical Gardens, the Brooklyn Museum, the Children's Museum - they all have days that are free to the public, and they would be great learning experiences for her.

A PARENT VOLUNTEER opens the door, and crying spills out.

PARENT VOLUNTEER

I'm sorry to interrupt. Miss Luna, we have another biting situation.

As Miss Luna steps through, Joseph spots Mary, who is patting the back of an obese crying boy (FAT ALBERT) while a MEAN-FACED GIRL looks on. Joseph turns and walks slowly down the hallway, shoulders slumped.

MISS LUNA

(sticking her head back out the door)

Mr. Johnson.

(he turns)

We'll see you at 2:20.

Her smile is consoling; he attempts to return it. As he walks past the office, an uptight voice spews out. . .

SECRETARY (O.S.)

Mr. Johnson, we need that paperwork.

EXT. PS 40 - DAY

Joseph enters the quiet street. Unsure where to go, he heads toward the church. Pausing, he goes inside.

INT. OUR MOTHER OF PEACE CHURCH

He removes his hat, waits as his eyes adjust. He walks up the aisle, sits in front of a large figure of Jesus on the cross. He bows his head, tries to feel something.

Nothing.

Off to the left, he spots a small alcove with a large statue of the Virgin Mary in it. He stands up.

JOSEPH
 (respectfully, to Jesus)
 Excuse me.

He walks to the alcove, and takes a seat in the middle of the first pew. Eyes riveted to Mary, as if she could somehow teach him all the secrets of mothering. He closes his eyes.

Suddenly sensing he's not alone, Joseph opens his eyes. He looks to his left, and sees one of the large black women (MARY ONE), sitting very close to him. She smiles at him. Looking to his right, he sees a mirror image of her, only slightly thinner (MARY TWO). He looks back at the first Mary.

MARY ONE
 (whispering)
 Have you come to talk to the
 Mother?

Joseph looks at her, unsure how to answer. Mary Two leans in.

MARY TWO
 It's okay to admit it. She's not
 jes' for us women.

MARY ONE
 (placing her hand on
 Joseph's leg)
 Ever'body can use a little more
 mothering. Can I get a second?

MARY TWO
 I second that emotion.

His head moves from one Mary to the other. The moment is surreal.

MARY ONE
 (nodding toward Jesus on
 the cross)
 See, the son over there, God bless
 'em, but he's got'nuff weight on
 his heart with his own suffering.
 But Mary here. . .

All three of them turn toward Mary.

MARY ONE (CONT'D)
 She got a heart big'nuff to hold
 all of us's sufferin'.

MARY TWO
 (nodding vigorously)
 Uh-huh.

MARY ONE
Can I get a second?

MARY TWO
I WILL definitely second that
emotion.

Joseph stares straight ahead, unsure where this is going.
Mary One places her hand on his leg again.

MARY ONE
Tell your troubles. Tell your
troubles to Mary.

All heads turn to the Virgin Mary. Momentary respectful
silence. Simultaneously, both women break the silence,
snapping their heads back to Joseph.

MARY ONE (CONT'D)
We could use your help wit'
somethin'.

INT. CHURCH KITCHEN - DAY

The LARGE BEHINDS of the two women fill the screen. They are
bent at the waist, both their heads together looking down the
steep basement stairs.

MARY ONE
Come on baby. Jes a few more steps.

MARY TWO
Careful baby!

A loud THUDDING noise, followed by a painful grunt.

MARY ONE
You'se okay?

An affirmative grunt as the two Marys part, and Joseph comes
up the stairs carrying a huge box. He tries to set it down -
but it drops - on the counter.

MARY ONE (CONT'D)
You'se a saint. Thank you.

JOSEPH
It's mighty dark down there. You
might consider getting some mo'
light.

The Marys open the box and take out cans of tomato sauce.

MARY ONE

But there ain't no light in hell!

She and Mary Two share a deep belly laugh.

MARY TWO

(to a curious Joseph)
Hell's but what we call the
basement.

Joseph nods. He puts his hands in his pockets, not sure what to do, but not ready to go either.

MARY ONE

Grab that recipe book dere, honey.

Joseph thumbs through the book with interest.

MARY TWO

Find the spaghetti sauce. We got a
lunch to make for the ole folks
that comes here.

Finding the page, he hands Mary Two the open book.

MARY ONE

Help me open dese cans.
(handing him a can opener)
And while you'se opening 'em, you
can open your mouth and tell us
your troubles.

Joseph puts his head down and focuses on the cans, while the Marys make preparations. After a decent interval. . .

MARY ONE (CONT'D)

I only hear but one kind'a opening.

Joseph even more intently opens the cans.

MARY TWO

Is it your little girl?

He looks up, surprised.

MARY ONE

That's enough cans. How'bout
buttering up those loaves.

She motions to some bread next to a tub of butter. He fumbles, trying to get the butter open.

A hand on his back. He turns around quickly, spooked, knife upraised. Both Marys have closed in on him.

MARY TWO
 Trouble with her momma?

Joseph has a "deer in the headlights" look.

JOSEPH
 No. No. She don't have a momma.

MARY ONE
 Everybody has a momma. Even Jesus
 over dere.

Pointing to a picture of Jesus on the wall.

JOSEPH
 I mean, course she has a momma,
 but. . .

Both Marys look at him intently.

JOSEPH (CONT'D)
 What I means to say is that her
 momma is gone, and her daddy is my
 son, and he give her to me to
 raise, and. . .

MARY ONE
 And you just don't feel 'quipped.

Joseph doesn't understand.

MARY TWO
 'Quipped. Like with girl clothes,
 and girl toys, and girl knowledge.

JOSEPH
 I don't got none of that.
 (beat - sigh)
 I got nothing to give her.

MARY ONE
 Oh yes you do.

MARY TWO
 You do honey.

MARY ONE
 You'se got a heart a' gold.

Both Marys look at each other and nod.

MARY TWO
 And we can help you with the rest.

MONTAGE

A) The two Marys walk down Joseph's street, huge stuffed garbage bags in tow. People step off the sidewalk as they pass.

B) Joseph sits inside the apartment at his work table. All helicopters are replaced by several small pieces of doll furniture in progress.

C) The Marys make over Joseph's apartment with their hand-me-downs of all things feminine. Joseph's apartment goes from bachelor-brown to dolled-up pink in the space of a song. They hold up little girl clothes (shirts, skirts, shoes, socks, underwear - all are foreign to Joseph); they cuddle up to stuffed animals; they show him how to play with dolls; Mary One shows Joseph how to braid hair using Mary Two as a model.

D) Joseph, all smiles, almost runs down the street away from the school with Mary, dragging her behind him.

E) Joseph carries Mary into the house and into the bedroom. He puts his hand over her eyes. Kneeling beside her, he makes a big gesture of uncovering her eyes. Mary's face goes from 0 to 100 watts in 3 seconds flat!

F) Joseph serves Mary spaghetti. She claps!

G) Mary and Joseph lay on the couch, both of them reading their own books, with piles on the coffee table too.

H) Joseph puts the Mary statue in a new Barbie bed. Mary takes her out and puts her back in the bed Joseph made.

I) Joseph does Mary's hair, painfully. No more pleasure on her face! Her braids are jutting out every which way as Joseph concentrates intensely.

J) Joseph and Mary leave the apartment. Mary is wearing a new (used) dress. Ida looks out the window, surprised. What can she find to be displeased about next?

At the bottom of the steps, one of Mary's shoes, obviously too big for her, falls off. There it is. Ida shakes her head, her scowl returning.

K) Mary proudly struts up to the Virgin statue, stops, and spins around, showing the Virgin her new dress.

L) Joseph walks back to the kitchen of the church. The two Marys welcome him, and put him to work.

M) Joseph serves food to a room full of old folks.

N) Joseph exits the church with the recipe book in hand.

O) Joseph shops for groceries in a "real" market, referring back to his recipe book constantly.

MONTAGE ENDS

As the doorbell rings.

INT. APARTMENT - NIGHT

Joseph answers. The two Marys jostle to get in first.

INT. KITCHEN

Joseph carries a steaming plate of hamburger mix to the table. The Marys exclaim loudly over it.

JOSEPH
It's Sloppy Joes. From "The Cold
Winter's Night" section.

He sits down, and takes a bun from a plate.

JOSEPH (CONT'D)
You eat 'em like this.

He slops some mix onto the bun, puts another on top, and takes a big bite. Meat mix squirts out the back and onto his lap. Mary laughs into her hands - the two Marys laugh unabashedly.

JOSEPH (CONT'D)
(mouth full, and tongue in
cheek)
Don't know why they call it Sloppy
Joes.

Mary One takes a bite as Joseph watches her response carefully. She tries not to let her face register the blandness of the food.

JOSEPH (CONT'D)
It's no good?

MARY ONE
It's fine, baby. Maybe it just
needs some spices or somethin'.

Joseph walks into the kitchen, throwing open all the cupboards trying to find any spices. He opens the cupboard with the wine bottle in it.

He pauses, takes a deep breath, takes it out, turns it over almost reverently in his hands. His old saviour. He drops it into the garbage as Mary One yells

MARY ONE (O.S.) (CONT'D)
Even just some pepper would do.

INT. KITCHEN - LATER

The dinner's almost gone. The older women are in mid-story, and little Mary is mesmerized, hands on elbows, looking back and forth between the two of them.

MARY ONE
Our parents was only 'specting one of us, so they only had one name ready.

MARY TWO
When the nurse asked them to name me, they said "Ah, jes' name her Mary too."

The Marys laugh. They have been laughing over this joke for 50 years.

MARY
(wide-eyed)
You'se both named Mary?

MARY TWO
Sure is.
(pointing to her sister)
Mary One, and
(pointing to herself)
Mary Two.

MARY ONE
When we was ten, we asked them for different names. Well, Daddy was a man given to jokin' . . .

MARY TWO
I second that emotion!

MARY ONE
Thus he declares us Mary Fat and Thin.

MARY TWO
And when he would come home from work. . .

MARY ONE

He would greet us sayin' "Hail
Marys, Fat and Thin"!

Huge belly laughs all around the table now.

MARY TWO

Oh, there was just no end to
Daddy's jokes.
(crossing herself)
God rest his soul in heaven.

MARY ONE

(reaching across the table
to pat her sister's hand)
We hope!

Peals of laughter again. Both Marys pound their hands on the
table.

They pause to catch their intertwined breath. Mary Two pats
little Mary's hand.

MARY TWO

So if you want to call me by my
full name, I'm Mary Thin Two.

MARY ONE

(patting little Mary's
hand too)
And you can call me Mary Fat One.
Sounds like we got some Indian
names, don't it!
(placing her hand over her
heart)
I say that with respect. Those
Indians sure did suffer.

Both Marys simultaneously cross themselves, nodding.

MARY ONE (CONT'D)

So we got ourselves three Marys and
a Joseph.

MARY TWO

Sounds about right. Only one good
man for every three women who wants
one.

She leans in toward Joseph.

MARY TWO (CONT'D)

And speaking of women, Joseph, you
gots one?

Joseph stands up, embarrassed, and clears the table.

MARY ONE

Mary Two, you stop that. You're embarrassing the man.

When Joseph leans across her for a plate, she grabs his arm.

MARY ONE (CONT'D)

Well are you looking for one? A
Mary Fat One?

She lets go of his arm, and when he turns around, she lightly slaps his ass.

MARY TWO

MARY ONE!

Mary One looks at Joseph's rear-end walking away.

MARY ONE

I just couldn't help myself, his
beee-hind is deee-licious!
(snapping her head back to
her sister)
You know you been eye balling it
too!

MARY TWO

We been single a looonnnnnngggg
time, Joseph.

MARY ONE

Too long, Mary Two, too long.

MARY TWO

I second that emotion. I thirds it
even!

Little Mary giggles, loving the banter.

INT. LIVING ROOM - NIGHT

Mary sleeps curled up on Joseph's lap on the couch, the two Marys sitting with them. Joseph strokes Mary's hair absentmindedly while talking.

JOSEPH

When I come back from the war,
everything was different. I
couldn't enjoy nothing no more. Not
my old life, not my work. . .
(MORE)

JOSEPH (cont'd)

(beat)

. . .not my wife.

He looks up. Their caring faces say it's safe to go on.

JOSEPH (CONT'D)

I couldn't even enjoy the activity
God gave a man to enjoy with his
wife.

The Marys nod and coo sympathetically.

JOSEPH (CONT'D)

And my son, he was a stranger to
me. He was just born when I got
called up, and when I got back, I
couldn't place him, you know?

They nod.

JOSEPH (CONT'D)

I just couldn't place him. There
was no room in my heart for him
neither.

(beat)

I started believing I didn't have a
heart anymore. . . like the bullets
that went through my back just
clean blew it up.

MARY ONE

(patting him on the leg)

Oh baby. Poor baby.

JOSEPH

And I kept drinkin' and drinkin',
and then I took to wandering at
night... trying to find myself...
trying to lose myself... I don't
know.

MARY TWO

How'd you do it? How'd you find
yourself?

Joseph continues on, lost in his need for confession.

JOSEPH

I was lost on the streets for 30
years -- homeless and a drunk. I
lost everything that mattered to me
when I went to Vietnam. . . and
when I came back, I lost it again.

(MORE)

JOSEPH (cont'd)

I shamed my momma and I shamed my wife and I shamed my son and I shamed myself.

MARY ONE

You still see your son?

JOSEPH

Once a year since I'm sober and I got this place, he comes by for Christmas, bring me a new sweater, and we have some lunch. But I can't say I ever found him in my heart.

(beat)

That still pains me.

Overcome with sadness, Mary One leans over to give him a hug, and smothers little Mary, who stirs. Joseph pulls her close to him, all heart now.

JOSEPH (CONT'D)

I best be getting this little girl to bed.

They rise from the sofa, Mary One dabbing her eyes. This time, she more skillfully embraces Joseph, and Mary Two does as well. Mary and Joseph are enveloped in their arms.

They rock like that for some time.

INT. KITCHEN - DAY

Joseph sets down two plates of eggs, sausage, and orange slices. Mary frowns.

JOSEPH

No more pop-tarts. They ain't good for you. They're mostly sugar, and the fruit ain't real.

Mary stabs the sausage with her fork. Joseph kisses her cheek before he sits down.

JOSEPH (CONT'D)

You gonna find it hard to stay mad at me when I tell you what we're doing today.

He leans over and cuts her sausage for her. She's intrigued.

JOSEPH (CONT'D)

We're going into New York City proper!

INT. SUBWAY TRAIN - DAY

What a difference a little time makes. On the subway now, Mary sits beside Joseph, alert, happily holding his hand.

AN ADVERTISEMENT for a women's clinic lines the wall. Mary points at a woman holding her new baby.

MARY
There's a Mary.

Joseph nods.

EXT. STATEN ISLAND FERRY STATION - DAY

Joseph and Mary enter.

INT. FERRY - DAY

Mary eats a hotdog, stares out the window at the water. Suddenly, the Statue of Liberty comes into view. Mary's mouth - full of hot dog - falls open and her eyes widen. She tugs at Joseph's shirt. He sees it too.

JOSEPH
You wanna go outside?

All she can do is nod.

EXT. FERRY

Mary stands on the bench, Joseph holding her close.

MARY
It's the biggest Mary ever!

JOSEPH
That it is, baby. That is it.

INT. SUBWAY TRAIN - DAY

Mary sits next to Joseph, holding a Statue of Liberty figurine in her hand.

EXT. CHINATOWN - DAY

Mary examines items on an outdoor table, while Joseph picks out books from the next table. Mary finds a small statue of the goddess Kuan Yin. She turns to Joseph and shouts. . .

MARY
Another Mary!

A CHINESE SHOPOWNER comes over to Mary, as does Joseph, books in hand.

CHINESE SHOPOWNER
Kuan Yin.

Mary looks at her blankly.

CHINESE SHOPOWNER (CONT'D)
That Kuan Yin.
(smiling)
Chinese Mary.

Mary holds Kuan Yin dearly with a gaze of love.

CHINESE SHOPOWNER (CONT'D)
You want? You want Kuan Yin?

Mary nods shyly.

CHINESE SHOPOWNER (CONT'D)
You take. You take queen mother.

Mary whispers "thanks" while never taking her eyes off of Kuan Yin.

INT. SUBWAY TRAIN - DAY

Mary holds Kuan Yin in one hand facing the Statue of Liberty in the other, making them talk. Joseph sits with a grocery bag of books on his lap, totally content.

EXT. CROWN HEIGHTS STREET - DUSK

Mary and Joseph walk home from the subway with their day's worth of loot in hand.

MARY
And Miss Luna say maybe I can be
the Mary.

A bus pulls up in the b.g.

JOSEPH
Yea?

A BLACK WOMAN gets off the bus, yanking a young child who has a coat in his hand.

MARY

Then Meeko said maybe Fat Albert
should be the baby Jesus. . .

The young child's coat falls into the wet gutter.

JOSEPH

Yea?

BLACK WOMAN

(yelling)
I told you to put that coat on!

MARY

And everybody laughed exceptin' Fat
Albert.

JOSEPH

Yea?

MARY

So I told Meeko to shut the hell
up.

BLACK WOMAN

Pick it up!
(the child does nothing)
PICK IT UP, I SAYS.

Mary hears the yelling. She slows down her walk, but doesn't
look back. Joseph hears it too, tries to distract Mary.

JOSEPH

Then what did Miss Luna say?

BLACK WOMAN

Do you want me to beat your butt?
Cuz I will. I will beat your butt
right here.

Mary, in terror, stops walking.

Joseph squats down, books on his knees. He takes Mary's chin
in hand, tries to engage her wild eyes.

JOSEPH

What did Miss Luna say, angel?

SLAPPING SOUND, followed by a CHILD'S WAILING.

Flashback. Panic. Mary snaps her face out of Joseph's grasp,
and turns around. They are far enough away, and it is dark
enough, for Mary to mistake this woman for her mother.

Before Joseph knows what hit him, Mary is gone. He fumbles to stand, drops the books, trips over them. By the time he rounds the corner after her, she is nowhere in sight.

EXT. VARIOUS CROWN HEIGHTS STREETS - NIGHT

QUICK CUTS - Joseph running and searching as dusk turns dark.

I/E. JOSEPH'S APARTMENT - NIGHT

Joseph runs to his apartment building, looking for Mary on the steps. She's not there. He knows she can't possibly be inside the apartment, but he looks anyway, shouting

JOSEPH
Mary? MARY? MARY!

THROUGH THE BEDROOM WINDOW, Ida looks up upon hearing his cries.

Joseph leaves the door unlocked as he runs back down the stairs and into the street. Ida throws open her front window.

IDA
Joseph! Where's Mary? Joseph? What
on earth. . . ?

He ignores her, and continues running through. . .

EXT. CROWN HEIGHTS STREETS

And back to where he lost Mary. No sight of her. He stands, lost, spinning in circles. Suddenly, an idea.

I/E. OUR MOTHER OF PEACE CHURCH

Joseph runs into the church. Empty.

JOSEPH
(almost wailing)
NOOOO!!
(then)
Mary!!!!

MARY'S ALTAR. He'll try anything. He approaches, kneels. Out of breath, he tries to pray.

JOSEPH
Hail M. . . Mary. Hail Mary. . .

Breaking down, he suddenly feels two hands on his back. He turns to the left - there stands Mary One. He turns to the right - Mary Two.

EXT. OUR MOTHER OF PEACE CHURCH - NIGHT

On the steps outside, both Marys hold Joseph's hands in between theirs.

MARY ONE

We'll be waiting at your house.

MARY TWO

It's gonna be alright.

(gestures to Mary statue
outside the church)

Our mother will bring your baby
home just fine.

JOSEPH

How do you know? I mean no
disrespect, but she. . . she
couldn't even save her own son.

He walks away, leaving them stunned. But only for a beat.

Then - both Marys reach simultaneously for some PRAYER BEADS from their dress pockets.

MARY ONE

Joseph!

He comes back. They hand him the prayer beads.

MARY ONE (CONT'D)

You pray on these 'til your faith
returns.

JOSEPH

(sure only of this)

That little girl IS my faith.

EXT. CROWN HEIGHTS STREETS - LATE NIGHT

Joseph walks, working the prayer beads in both hands. Over and over he repeats the only words to the rosary he knows...

JOSEPH

Hail Mary, full of grace. Hail
Mary, full of grace.

The streets are deserted - of children at least. He sees one man with a child about Mary's size, and runs after them.

JOSEPH (CONT'D)

MARY!

The child and the man turn around. It's not Mary.

Joseph wanders the streets seeing them through the eyes of a father - full of dangers to his innocent daughter.

A COUPLE argues, and the man pushes the woman into a wall.

DRUG DEALERS try to entice him.

THE HOMELESS lie on the sidewalks.

GANGSTERS listen to loud music, aimlessly shooting the shit.

PROSTITUTES lean against walls.

Finally, Joseph returns to where Mary bolted. The torn paper bag is still there, along with a few scattered books. He kicks the bag and gathers the books, and sits them next to him against the wall. He closes his eyes, still muttering the Hail Mary and turning the prayer beads over in his hands.

EXT. CROWN HEIGHTS STREET - MORNING

The STEEL TOES of a OFFICER'S boots startle Joseph awake. He is disoriented. Is this a nightmare? Is he homeless again?

He looks up, recognizing the cop. Oh shit.

SERIOUS OFFICER

Wake up, man. Off the street.

Joseph stands, shielding his eyes from the bright sun - and trying to avoid the question in the officer's eyes.

SERIOUS OFFICER

Johnson?

He motions to the patrol car for his partner.

SERIOUS OFFICER

What the hell you doing out here?

FATHERLY OFFICER

(joining them)

Where's Mary? She go back home?

Joseph shakes his head, trying to shake out the truth and shake in his next lie.

JOSEPH

Mary's visiting her mother. She's coming back though.

(as if to convince himself)

She's coming back today.

SERIOUS OFFICER

So I repeat. What the hell are you doing sleeping in the streets?

Joseph's face, a wreck of emotions, looks like he might cry.

FATHERLY OFFICER

You miss that girl?

Joseph nods, holding back tears.

FATHERLY OFFICER

You got drunk with your buddies, passed out?

Joseph nods again.

FATHERLY OFFICER

Joseph, you have got to keep yourself together for that girl.

JOSEPH

I know, I know.

(searching for something, then quickly)

I got her in school. She's doing real good. Miss Luna - her teacher - she lets me stay sometimes, be the parent volunteer. And. . .

SERIOUS OFFICER

(taking over)

Look, we warned you the first time we came to your apartment. . .

JOSEPH

(head down)

I know.

SERIOUS OFFICER

And we warned you again the day there was alcohol in that girl's lemonade.

Joseph's head sinks lower.

SERIOUS OFFICER (CONT'D)

And I am warning you again - if we hear of any other problems with you and that girl, we're gonna take her away from you and find her a more appropriate place to live. You hear? Because a drunken grandfather is no better than a drugged out mother, in the court's opinion - or, in mine.

EXT. CROWN HEIGHTS STREET - A LITTLE LATER

Joseph, books in hand, walks toward home. Alone. Very alone.

EXT. JOSEPH'S APARTMENT

Ida's window is closed. This time, it's Mary One hanging out of a window. She looks down at him, shakes her head "No."

EXT. OUR MOTHER OF PEACE CHURCH

Joseph walks back to the church, one Mary on each arm, almost holding him up. They enter the church after each kissing him on a cheek. He continues to the school, sits on the stoop.

EXT. PS 40 - LATER

The SECRETARY approaches. She reaches in her bag for her keys as she walks up the steps.

SECRETARY

Mr. Johnson. You're awfully early.
Where's your granddaughter?

She places the key in the door. When he doesn't answer, her perfunctory interest becomes real.

SECRETARY (CONT'D)

Mr. Johnson? Did she go back home?

She opens the door.

SECRETARY (CONT'D)

Well, it's for the best. A girl belongs with her mother.

She switches on the hallway light. As the door swings shut, she adds with biting breath. . .

SECRETARY (CONT'D)

Besides, she couldn't keep going here without her paperwork.

The door slams shut.

QUICK CUTS: The school door opens and closes. Parents come and go, children and teachers come and stay. Through it all, Joseph stays seated on the steps, glassy-eyed sad, until. . .

MARY

DADDY!

Joseph looks up, sees Mary drop Miss Luna's hand and come running toward him. He stands. Such homecoming you've never seen. In his arms, they spin around and around.

MISS LUNA

Did you get my message?

Joseph stops spinning, looks at her quizzically.

MISS LUNA (CONT'D)

Your neighbor, Ida something? I told her to tell you Mary was with me, and was fine.

Joseph is still too shocked to speak.

MISS LUNA (CONT'D)

Fat Al. . . Albert. . . saw Mary down by the park last night. His mother took her home and called me. I went by your apartment to leave you a note, but your neighbor told me she'd let you know as soon as you came home.

Joseph musters a nod. Mary pelts his cheek with kisses.

MISS LUNA (CONT'D)

She was fine. She spent the night with me. We played with her new Marys.

MARY

Miss Luna gave me another one!

He sets her down. She opens her hands, revealing a statue of the Virgin of Guadalupe.

MARY (CONT'D)

And we had hot chocolate! And Miss Luna has a cat and she slept by me all night!

JOSEPH

Thank you. I. . .

MISS LUNA

It was no problem. She's wonderful.
(kneeling to Mary's level)

When I have a daughter, I hope she turns out

(tapping Mary on the nose
once for each word)

just. . . like . . . you!

She stands, then adds quietly to Joseph. . .

MISS LUNA

Without the foul language!

JOSEPH

(quickly, defensively)

She didn't learn that from me.

MISS LUNA

She needs to unlearn that from you!

(to Mary)

Well, we better get in.

(to Joseph, with
compassion)

Would you like to stay and be a parent volunteer today, Joseph?

As Joseph smiles, Mary jumps with joy.

MARY

Yay! Yay! Yay!

She attempts to pull him up the stairs, but he hesitates.

JOSEPH

Just a minute, baby. There's somebody else I gotta thank.

Miss Luna winks at Joseph, takes Mary's hand and leads her into the school.

Joseph turns around to walk to

OUR MOTHER OF PEACE CHURCH

where he sees Mary One and Mary Two waiting for him by the door. He takes off the prayer beads as he walks toward him. They dot their moist eyes with their handkerchiefs.

When he reaches them, they envelop him in an embrace.

JOSEPH

Thank you.

MARY ONE

Let's thank the Mother.

They each take a hand, and head into church.

I/E. PS 40 - DAY

Joseph and Mary walk down the hall and out of the school.

JOSEPH

What should we do this afternoon,
baby?

MARY

Let's go find some more Marys!

I/E. BROOKLYN MUSEUM - DAY

Mary and Joseph run up the steps of the museum. Music plays.

A SERIES OF SHOTS

A) Mary drags Joseph from one room to room, pointing out all the images of Mary in each room - it's Isis in the Egyptian gallery, Kuan Yin in the Asian gallery, African sculptures of mother figures, Impressionist paintings of mothers and daughters, Byzantine images of the Virgin and child.

B) Joseph and Mary enter the Botanical Gardens.

C) They walk through the rose garden. Mary sees a statue of a woman holding a basket of grapes. She runs to it, staring up in wonder. Another Mary.

She circles around the statue, then runs up and down the long aisles of the rose gardens while Joseph watches. She gathers up handfuls of flower petals, and throws them up in the air. In slow motion, they scatter down and around her and Joseph.

D) Sitting up in bed, Mary places the Statue of Liberty, the Virgin of Guadalupe, Kuan Yin, a new African goddess statue, and the original Mary in the furniture Joseph has made, which now consists of a bed, a couch, two chairs, a table, a dresser - and a bookshelf with books carved into it.

INT. KITCHEN - NIGHT

Joseph clears the table from another healthy homemade meal. Mary's plate reveals the remnants of uneaten asparagus.

JOSEPH
Asparagus's good for you.

Mary shakes her head in silent disbelief.

JOSEPH (CONT'D)
It's got lots of Vitamins A and C
in it.

Mary looks at the asparagus with disgust.

JOSEPH (CONT'D)
And it's high in iron.
(seeing how Mary could
care less)
So what'ya learn in school today?

MARY
(lighting up)
Mary had a little lamb!

JOSEPH
Mary had a little lamb?

MARY
Yea! And it had fleas as white as
snow!

Joseph continues clearing as Mary begins to sing "Mary Had A Little Lamb." Soon he joins in. When they finish, she says

MARY (CONT'D)
I'm your little lamb.

JOSEPH
No, you're my Mary.

MARY
Then you be MY little lamb!

Joseph sets down the last of the dishes, drops to his knees, and pretends to be a lamb. Mary runs with delight through the apartment and into the

BEDROOM

while he chases her, bleating. When he catches her, they tousele on the floor. He nuzzles up against her.

Mary giggles, loving it, but bristles against his whiskers.

MARY (CONT'D)
Don'tcha know how to shave?

JOSEPH
(feeling his beard)
Too rough?

Mary nods affirmatively.

JOSEPH (CONT'D)
I can shave it then.

MARY
I can shave it for you.

INT. BATHROOM

Mary rubs shaving cream on his face as he sits on the toilet.

JOSEPH
You sure you know what you doing?

Mary nods, picking up the razor confidently.

MARY
I use to shave my other daddy.

She places the blade next to his skin and slowly scrapes. Only unconditional love would allow this action.

INT. BEDROOM

Mary is tucked in bed. Joseph leans over her, his face full of Kleenex-clogged nicks, and kisses her good night.

JOSEPH
Thank you Mary.

He stands up to leave, then sits back down. Tentatively...

JOSEPH
Honey, what's your real name?

Her face clouds over immediately. He assures her...

JOSEPH
I'll still call you Mary if you
wants but. . . I'd just like to
know your real name.

A long beat as she considers this, and then gives in.

MARY
It's Aan-hellica.

JOSEPH
Aan-hellica?

MARY
Aan-hellica. It's angel in Spanish.
(beat)
My first daddy was in Spanish.

JOSEPH
And your second daddy? Who's he?

Mary smiles her hundred watt smile as she points to his chest. He puts his hand on his heart, feigns surprise. Then he puts his hand on her heart, pats it as she drifts off...

JOSEPH (CONT'D)
(like a lullaby)
My angel. My little lamb. My little
girl. My Mary. My Mary.

Mary sleeps.

EXT. JOSEPH'S APARTMENT - DAY

Joseph opens the building door for Mary, bundled up in a warm coat. Snow falls lightly.

Ida Pulley comes up her steps as they head down. Joseph tips his hat at her.

JOSEPH
(gesturing to the snow)
It's nearly Christmas, Miss Pulley.

IDA
It nearly is, Joseph. Will your son
be making his usual visit this
year?

On Joseph's face - alarm. He hasn't considered this complication.

She closes the door while he considers his response.

MONTAGE

Set to the Christmas carol "Angels We Have Heard on High."

A) At a Christmas tree lot. Joseph points to a small tree - Mary pulls him over to a much larger one. A large tree looks like its moving on its own accord until it reaches the attendant, then Joseph appears from behind it. He pulls out a twenty dollar bill - the attendant shakes his head no. He leads Joseph and Mary to some smaller trees. A smaller tree looks like its moving on its own accord until it reaches the attendant, then Mary appears from behind it. Joseph hands him the twenty again. Everyone smiles.

B) Mary making paper ornaments of angels; Joseph making wooden crosses for their stands. They put them on the tree.

C) Joseph and Mary skating, very badly, at Wollman Rink in Prospect Park.

D) Mary in the Winter Pageant playing Mary to Fat Albert's Joseph. Unexpectedly, as they beam at Jesus in the manger, Albert kisses Mary's cheek, nearly knocking her over. The two Marys and Joseph laugh from the audience.

E) Backstage after the Pageant, the principal Mrs. Whitman takes a POLAROID PICTURE of Mary with Joseph on one side, Miss Luna on the other, and the two Marys book-ending them. She hands it to Mary.

F) Candlelight mass services on Christmas Eve. Joseph sits, Mary in his lap, flanked by the Marys on either side. All three Marys wear matching Christmas dresses.

MONTAGE ENDS

EXT. OUR MOTHER OF PEACE CHURCH - THAT NIGHT

The Marys hug Joseph, hug Mary, say their good nights.

MARY ONE

Merry Christmas, little Mary!

MARY TWO

You best go straight to sleep if
you want Santa Claus to come!

MARY ONE

Joseph. You're. . .
 (kissing his cheek
 tenderly)
 . . . a saint.

Mary Two kisses his other cheek.

MARY TWO

(tenderly)
 I second that emotion.

He smiles shyly, and starts to walk away with Mary.

MARY ONE

(suddenly, with
 presentiment)
 Joseph. . .

He turns around. She stumbles, unsure of what she has to say,
 and then. . .

MARY ONE (CONT'D)

You take care, now.

Mary Two nods her head. Joseph continues walking, but sensing
 the ominous feeling, turns back toward them. They stand, hand
 in hand, waving goodbye.

INT. BEDROOM - LATER THAT NIGHT

Joseph kisses a sleeping Mary good night. The Christmas carol
 "Breath of Heaven (Mary's Song)" begins. He enters the

LIVING ROOM

and pulls a bag out from under the couch. Inside is an art
 book about Mary, full of images across history and culture.
 He quietly tears out a full page picture, then another, as
 the song plays.

After he has a large pile, he moves to the

BEDROOM

where he quietly piins the pictures onto to the walls.

When the walls are covered, he strings little white Christmas
 lights like stars from the ceiling. He tacks up a large glow-
 in-the-dark moon to the ceiling above where Mary sleeps.

INT. BEDROOM - LATER THAT NIGHT

Mary slowly awakens. She sits up, looks around. Magic. The room looks like heaven. Hundreds of Marys look upon her.

Mary looks down at Joseph sleeping beside her. She pats his cheek so tenderly. She lays back down, eyes wide open.

The music ends.

INT. EBEDROOM - MORNING

Joseph opens his eyes. Mary lays on her back staring at the ceiling, beatific smile on her face. She turns to him, her hand sweeping across the room.

MARY

Mary came.

JOSEPH

(looking around)

That she did. That she did.

(beat)

Shall we see if Santa came too?

Mary jumps up and runs into the living room. Joseph goes to the window and pulls back the curtain.

Ida is there, as usual, reading her Bible. Through the open window, he hears her say

IDA

Merry Christmas, Joseph.

He tips his imaginary hat at her, then hurries away to join Mary, who is shrieking with delight in the

LIVING ROOM

as she kneels before a used bicycle lying under the tree.

MARY

Santa came!

JOSEPH

That he did. That he did.

MARY

Can we go outside for a ride?

JOSEPH
(laughing)
After breakfast baby.

MARY
I wanna go now.

He tousles her hair good-naturedly.

JOSEPH
After breakfast, baby.

He gets up and walks into the kitchen.

JOSEPH (O.S.) (CONT'D)
I'm making you a special breakfast
this morning.

Mary picks up the bike. She examines the little license plate on the back. It says "Angel."

INTERCUT Mary's actions in the living room with Joseph in the kitchen.

Joseph opens the cupboards, takes out a box of pop-tarts.

JOSEPH
Yes indeed. A special Christmas
breakfast.

Mary balances the bike on its kickstand. She walks all around it, examining it closely.

Joseph pops the tarts in the toaster, then takes out a plate.

JOSEPH (CONT'D)
Yep, this might be the very
breakfast that Mary and Joseph had
that morning to celebrate the birth
of the baaa-by Jesus.

Mary tries to get on it, but she can't swing her leg over the bar in the middle. She kicks it over, then rights it.

Joseph pours two glasses of orange juice. The tarts pop up.

JOSEPH (CONT'D)
When the wise men saw this
breakfast, they said, "UMMM-HMMMM.
What store you get these at? We
gotta get us some of these."

Mary attempts again by tilting the bike toward her. This time, she swings her leg over and gets on the seat.

She sits there, pleased with herself. She tries to put her feet on the pedals, but they won't reach. She has to stand up. She hovers precariously over the bar as the bike wobbles.

Joseph puts the pop-tarts on a plate and grabs two napkins.

JOSEPH (CONT'D)

And after breakfast, you can ride
your bike to the park, and we'll go
skating again, and have hot
chocolate with marshmallows for
lunch!

Mary puts all her weight on one pedal, but her foot slides off. She comes down hard between her legs on the center bar of the bike. The bike falls on top of her. She SCREAMS.

Joseph flies into the room. The two pop-tarts on the plate go flying too. He drops the plate, and pulls Mary out from under the bike.

Mary screams, hands between her legs under her nightgown. Joseph stands her up.

THROUGH THE BEDROOM WINDOW

Ida's head perks up when she hears the screams.

Back in the living room. . .

JOSEPH

What is it? What is it, baby?

He tries to pull her hands from her crotch. Mary screams louder.

JOSEPH (CONT'D)

Let me see.
(more insistently)
Let me see!

He forces her hands away. There is a small amount of blood on them.

JOSEPH (CONT'D)

Oh my god. Oh my god.

He fumbles to take her panties off.

MARY

(screaming)
No! NOOOOO!

JOSEPH

Take these off. We have to take
these off. You have to let me see.

THROUGH THE BEDROOM WINDOW

Ida pulls her bedroom window all the way up.

LIVING ROOM

Joseph gets the panties off. Mary sees the blood on them,
retches, then vomits. Joseph throws his arm around her,
carrying her quickly through the

BEDROOM

where the panties fall on the floor and into the

BATHROOM

where he places her next to the sink.

THROUGH THE BEDROOM WINDOW

Ida sees the bloody panties, sees Joseph running a half-naked
Mary into the bathroom. Then she hears

JOSEPH (O.S.)

I'm not gonna hurt you. Mary,
listen to me. I'm not gonna hurt
you. Just let me see.

Ida's blood boiling, she yells at the top of her lungs

IDA

Sttttttooooopppppp! Stop, you
pervert, you heathen, STOP!

She runs for the phone.

IN THE BATHROOM, Joseph hears Ida, is flustered, panicked,
unsure what to do.

MARY

(screaming)
It hurts! It hurts!

He grabs a towel, drops it, opens the cupboard, closes it.

JOSEPH

Lemme get some ice. Maybe ice...

Joseph runs out of the bathroom and into the

BEDROOM

where he sees Ida in the window with the telephone. She shakes it at Joseph, then dials.

Joseph freezes. He spins toward the bathroom and Mary's cries, then turns back to the window as he hears Ida shout into the phone. . .

IDA

He's molesting an innocent child!

Joseph pulls closed the curtain, spinning around again. He looks at the bloody panties. He runs to the

BATHROOM

where Mary is trying to stop crying. He picks up the towel, and she hesitates, but opens her legs. He places the towel in between it gently, making cooing sounds to soothe her.

JOSEPH

It's okay. It's okay, baby. Hold this here.

She puts pressure on the towel. Joseph goes back into the

BEDROOM

where he goes to the closet and takes out a duffel bag. He throws some clothes of his and Mary's into it. He grabs her backpack, and throws it on the bed, shoving some books inside. He goes into the

BATHROOM

where Mary is wiping herself off with the towel.

JOSEPH

Did the bleeding stop?

She nods.

He stumbles for words.

JOSEPH (CONT'D)

Are you. . . are you cut?

She shrugs her shoulders. She can't see down there.

JOSEPH (CONT'D)

Can I look?

She nods assent. He looks between her legs, then back at her.

JOSEPH (CONT'D)

It's okay, baby. I don't see
nothing there. Something must of
happened inside. You're okay?

She nods.

JOSEPH (CONT'D)

(as if confirming it to
himself)

You're okay. You're okay.

He puts his hands on her shoulders, and looks deeply, and
gravely, into her eyes.

JOSEPH (CONT'D)

Mary, we have to go. We have to go
now. Do you understand? Miss
Pulley. . .

Mary nods her head, throws her arms around him.

I/E. JOSEPH'S APARTMENT BUILDING - MOMENTS LATER

Joseph runs down the stairs, duffle bag on one shoulder, Mary
(with her backpack on) in his arms. He heads for the front
door, stops abruptly, then turns and heads to the back door.

He opens that door, which leads to a garbage-filled alley. He
shuts the door behind them. Suddenly Mary cries. . .

MARY

Wait!

He stops abruptly.

MARY (CONT'D)

My Marys!

JOSEPH

Baby there's no. . .

Time. The look on her face says he has to make time.

JOSEPH (CONT'D)

(setting her down)

Wait here.

He runs up the stairs into the unlocked apartment and into the bedroom where he shoves the five Marys into his pockets.

EXT. PARK - DAY

Joseph carries Mary quickly past the park. He stops, looks over to the table where his buddies usually hang out, but no one is there yet.

Mary looks wistfully over his shoulder at the empty swings.

I/E. CROWN HEIGHTS APARTMENT BUILDING - DAY

Joseph presses A CALL BUTTON on the building wall. After a pause, a GRUFF VOICE answers.

GRUFF VOICE

What?

JOSEPH

It's Joseph. I need your help.

The BUZZER lets them in.

They trudge up a flight of stairs. At the landing, Joseph motions to Mary to sit.

JOSEPH

Wait here just a minute, okay
angel?

He takes the Kuan Yin and the Statue of Liberty out of his pocket, and hands them to her with a half-smile. He knocks on the door. Peter answers.

PETER

What up, Joseph?

Peter looks around the door, sees Mary sitting there. He motions them both in, but Joseph signals for Mary to wait.

INT. JOSEPH'S APARTMENT BUILDING - SIMULTANEOUSLY

Two OFFICERS, hands on their guns, knock on Joseph's door.

FIRST OFFICER

Brooklyn Police. Open up.

Ida, halfway down the stairs, peers up with her piercing eyes. The door is ajar; they enter the apartment.

INT. PETER'S LIVING ROOM

The usual assortment of a sloppy single man's garbage litters the room. The Macy's Christmas Parade plays loudly on the television. Peter turns it down, and motions to the couch.

PETER

Sit.

As Joseph does, something pokes him, and he raises himself halfway up, removes an almost empty whiskey bottle from beneath a pair of boxer shorts, and sets it on the end table.

PETER (CONT'D)

(sarcastically, nodding
toward the bottle)

You wanna drink?

INT. JOSEPH'S LIVING ROOM

The officers eye the Christmas tree, and the fallen bike beneath it. The Second Officer moves to the couch, where a stack of books sits. He picks up "Are You My Mother?" then puts it back down.

He eyes the rest of the apartment, pristine except for the broken plate. He kneels before it as if it held clues.

FIRST OFFICER

Jack.

Second Officer stands up. His partner points to the pop-tarts, and then to the vomit.

Ida, standing in the doorway, sees the scene and chimes in.

IDA

That's what they do. They charm the innocents with bikes and sweets and then they molest 'em.

She virtually spits the word "molest" out.

IDA (CONT'D)

I seen it on the television.

INT. PETER'S LIVING ROOM

Peter sits in his chair.

PETER

What kinda help you need, brother?

Joseph stares down at his hands clasped before him.

INT. JOSEPH'S BEDROOM

The Officers enter into the bedroom, slowly take in the shrine to Mary on the walls and ceiling. Under their scrutiny, it just looks creepy. After a beat. . .

SECOND OFFICER

Holy shit. . .

First Officer looks down, spots the bloody panties on the floor, while Second Officer takes in the open closet door, and the clothes strewn about. First Officer walks into the

BATHROOM

and sees the bloody towel.

FIRST OFFICER

Holy shit is right.

He picks up his radio to call for back-up.

INT. PETER'S LIVING ROOM

Peter nods his head in disbelief at what he's just heard.

JOSEPH

So I need some money. Whatever you can spare, brother. I just need to get Mary outta here. I gotta make sure she stays safe.

Peter leans back in his chair, and sighs deeply. Leaning forward again. . .

PETER

Joseph... even if I had money - which I don't - I wouldn't give you none. You gotta take that girl to the police.

Peter shakes his head even more vigorously in disbelief.

PETER (CONT'D)

You can't just TAKE a child.

JOSEPH

(defensively)

I didn't take her - she took me.

(MORE)

JOSEPH (cont'd)

She took me and she. . . she
changed me, man. She gave me my
life back. She gave me this back.

He pounds his right hand over his heart.

JOSEPH (CONT'D)

I've done nothing of no account
since I went to Vietnam and you
know it. All I did there was kill
people and all I did here was lie
around drunk trying to forget it.

PETER

You got cleaned up. You got a home.
You got friends - that you lied to.

JOSEPH

I got cleaned up and I got a home
for what? For what? So I could
sit around all day watching my
friends drink and sit around all
night making helicopters outta
wood?

Peter protests, but Joseph cuts him off.

JOSEPH (CONT'D)

(passionately)

That's NO life, brother. There
wasn't no love in it. Now there's
life and love and a chance to do
something good for the first time
ever.

PETER

You got a kid of your own already.
Why don't you make good with him?

EXT. JOSEPH'S STREET

A handsome, well-dressed man in his mid-30's (Joseph's son JOHN) walks vigorously up the sidewalk carrying a wrapped Christmas present. He watches as an unmarked car pulls in behind a patrol car that has its lights flashing.

INT. PETER'S LIVING ROOM

JOSEPH

It's too late for me and him - we
can't be saved. But Mary and me, we
got a chance still.

PETER
You ain't a savior, Joseph. You
just a man.

JOSEPH (CONT'D)
Not to her, I ain't.

EXT. JOSEPH'S STREET

A man (FATHERLY OFFICER) exits the car, and he and John
together approach the apartment stairs.

INT. PETER'S LIVING ROOM

JOSEPH
So you ain't gonna help us?

Peter slowly nods no.

Joseph grabs Peter's collar, something wild in his eyes.

JOSEPH
Then don't hurt us neither.
(tightening his grip)
Don't tell 'em I was here. Don't
you tell 'em nothing.

INT. JOSEPH'S LIVING ROOM

Ida turns and sees John entering the apartment.

IDA
(yelling to the police)
There he is, the son I was telling
you about. That's the man he SAYS
is the girl's daddy.

John looks perplexed. Behind him enters Fatherly Officer.

IDA
(to Fatherly Officer)
YOU! You let him do this. The
blood of that precious lamb is on
you.

INT. PETER'S LIVING ROOM

PETER

Joseph, I can't do that. They'll charge me with being an accessory or something. I can't take that bullet for you.

(convinced)

If they ask, gotta tell 'em.

Joseph interrupts, leaning in and glaring at Peter's eyes.

JOSEPH

If you have to tell 'em something, then you tell them that I am her father now and I love her and I would NEVER do her no harm. You tell 'em she needs me and I need her and there's NOTHING and there's NO ONE that's gonna take us away from each other.

He drops Peter's collar and walks slowly to the door, turning back with his hand on the doorknob.

JOSEPH (CONT'D)

You tell 'em that for me. You tell the whole world that.

EXT. SUBWAY STATION

Joseph and Mary, heads down, enter the subway.

INT. JOSEPH'S LIVING ROOM

Ida and John sit on the couch. Fatherly Officer interviews them, while the other two gather evidence.

JOHN

I have no idea where he got the child, but she sure as hell isn't mine.

IDA

I knew it. I knew it. He up to no good with that child.

FATHERLY OFFICER

Miss Pulley, please.

IDA

Grown man sleeping with a child...
I called ya'll and told you but you
don't listen, do you? Well, you
going to be listening to me now,
aren't you?

FATHERLY OFFICER

(more insistently)

Miss Pulley, please. Mr. Johnson,
I'm sorry to have to ask this, but
do you know anything about your
father that might lead us to
believe he kidnapped and molested
that child?

John looks at him, shaking his head.

JOHN

(slowly punctuating his
words)

I don't know anything about my
father at all.

EXT. TYRONE'S BROWNSTONE

Mary sits on the bottom of the stoop, while Joseph knocks
insistently on the door. Tyrone appears in the window above.

TYRONE

What the fuck, man! It's Christmas
fuckin' morning.

JOSEPH

(assertively)

I have to talk to you.

TYRONE

Oh, this better be good. This
better be good, mother-fucker, or
it's gonna be real bad for you.

Joseph turns back to see if Mary is watching. She quickly
looks away, and pretends she's playing with her Marys.

EXT. JOSEPH'S APARTMENT BUILDING

Second Officer uses the radio in his car.

SECOND OFFICER

Suspect Joseph Johnson, fifty-eight year old African-American, wanted for the kidnapping and possible rape of an African-American girl, approximately six years of age, answering to the name of Mary.

I/E. TYRONE'S BROWNSTONE

Tyrone opens the door.

TYRONE (CONT'D)

Talk, mother-fucker.

JOSEPH

Let me do the delivery tomorrow.

TYRONE

You quit. I already got someone else.

He attempts to shut the door, but Joseph inserts his foot.

JOSEPH

Wait.

TYRONE

(incredulous)
What the?

JOSEPH

I'm in some trouble here. I need money. I'll do anything.

Tyrone pauses for a minute.

TYRONE

Anything?

EXT. TYRONE'S BROWNSTONE - MINUTES LATER

Joseph sits on the stoop next to Mary.

Tyrone opens the door, carrying a small black duffle bag.

TYRONE

You're lucky my brother trusts you, because I sure as shit don't.

He hands him the bag.

TYRONE (CONT'D)

There's an empty lot behind my brother's church. Go there tonight, and hide behind the dumpster. Around eight, you'll hear a man whistling "Silent Night." Come out behind the dumpster, and give him that bag.

Joseph nods his head. Tyrone grabs him by the neck, and growls the rest of his speech.

TYRONE (CONT'D)

Keep your eyes down, and don't fuckin' THINK about looking at him. Give him the bag, and get out. You understand, ole man?

JOSEPH

(eyes down)

How will I get my money?

TYRONE

(explosive)

You'll get your fuckin' money if you don't fuck it up. Shit!

He closes his hand tighter on Joseph's throat.

TYRONE

You understand what will happen if you fuck this up? If there's a single cop anywhere in sight, or if anything happens to that bag, I will hunt you down and blow a hole in your mother-fuckin' face.

Joseph nods. Mary suddenly appears by Joseph's side. Startled, Tyrone takes his hand off Joseph's throat.

TYRONE (CONT'D)

(to Mary)

Who the fuck are you?

MARY

I'm Angel.

TYRONE

Angel?

He begins to laugh. A scantily dressed woman (TYRONE'S GIRLFRIEND) appears behind him at the door.

TYRONE'S GIRLFRIEND

(yawning)
Baby, who is it?

TYRONE

It's a fuckin' angel of the Lord
come to us on Christmas!

INT. JOSEPH'S APARTMENT

Serious Officer enters, goes to his partner, who with arms
crossed oversees a FORENSIC AGENT sampling Mary's blood.

SERIOUS OFFICER

Merry fucking Christmas.
(getting no response)
You still got a good feeling about
this?

I/E. OUR MOTHER OF PEACE CHURCH

Joseph and Mary walk up to the church, and enter. They look
around for the Marys, but the church is empty, Christmas
morning services finished. Joseph leads Mary up to the
Virgin's altar. They both sit, bowing their heads.

JOSEPH

(quietly)
Hail Mary, full of grace.

MARY

(even quieter)
Hail Mary, full of grace.

JOSEPH

Please Mother, protect me and my
girl.

MARY

Please Mother too.

Joseph leans down and kisses Mary on the head.

JOSEPH

Little girl, we need to hide until
dark. And I got just the place.

He takes a glass candle off the altar.

INT. PETER'S LIVING ROOM

On TELEVISION - Joseph's decades old military ID photo.

ANCHORWOMAN

It is unclear whether the suspect is armed and dangerous, but sources close to the case say that the Vietnam vet has a history of addiction and instability, most likely caused by Post Traumatic Stress Disorder.

CUT TO:

INT. CORNER MARKET

The Indian owner watches the screen, arms crossed, shaking his head.

Ida appears on screen with an INTERVIEWER. This is her fifteen minutes of fame, and she fully glorifies in it.

INTERVIEWER

We're here outside of the suspect's apartment with Ida Pulley, his next door neighbor. Miss Pulley, you told police you suspected from the beginning. . .

INT. CHURCH KITCHEN

Joseph opens the door to the basement. He takes Mary's hand to lead her downstairs, whispering. . .

JOSEPH

Don't be afraid.

INT. PETER'S LIVING ROOM - LATER THAT DAY

Peter is still in his chair, but this time a cop faces him on the couch.

SERIOUS OFFICER

Do you know anywhere else or anyone else he might have gone to for money?

Peter, silent, is clearly terrified.

SERIOUS OFFICER (CONT'D)
Kidnapping is a very serious
charge, Mr. Roberts.

PETER
Yes sir. Uh, lemme think. He use to
do some delivery work for this guy
name Tyrone. But I don't think he
does that no more.

SERIOUS OFFICER
Tyrone. You know his last name, and
where I might find him?

PETER
Yea, but. . . look Officer, Joseph
didn't hurt that girl. You saw them
together, you know he take good
care of her, and she's happy with
him. Maybe what he done ain't
right, but his heart is right. He
ain't no criminal. . . he may be a
foolish ole man, but he ain't no
criminal.

INT. CHURCH BASEMENT

One candle and one bare bulb light the basement. Joseph is
rooting around for food, but everything is in industrial-
sized boxes and cans. Then he sees a box of

COMMUNION WAFERS. He takes some of those, and a bottle of
grape juice, over to the corner where Mary sits. When he
leans down to hand her the wafers, the CROSS he wears falls
out of his shirt.

MARY
What's that?

Joseph opens up the juice.

JOSEPH
It's a cross my momma gave to me.

MARY
What's a cross?

He takes a swig of juice.

JOSEPH
It's what Jesus died on.

He hands Mary the juice, but she's too enthralled to take it.

MARY

Baby Jesus?

JOSEPH

No, grown-up Jesus.

She seems slightly relieved, and takes a bite of wafer.

MARY

Why? Why he die?

JOSEPH

He died for us, for our sins.

MARY

So we don't have to die?

JOSEPH

No, we still have to die, baby. But because of Jesus, we get to go to heaven when we die.

He offers her juice again, but she still refuses.

MARY

What's heaven?

JOSEPH

It's a place where good people go when they die.

(kissing her nose)

Like you!

MARY

And you?

JOSEPH

I hope so.

He takes a big swig of juice.

MARY

And the Marys?

JOSEPH

Definitely the Marys!

He holds the bottle of grape juice to her lips.

JOSEPH

Here, baby. Drink this for me.

She drinks while pondering her next question.

MARY
What about Miss Pulley?

JOSEPH
(thoughtfully)
She's trying real hard.

MARY
And Fat Albert?

JOSEPH
If he stops biting!

Mary takes another bite of wafer.

MARY
Who else?

JOSEPH
My mother will be there.
(beat)
I'd sure like to see her again.

This disturbs Mary on several fronts. She tugs on his cross.

MARY
I don't want you to wear it.

JOSEPH
Why not? Why not, baby?

She pulls harder. The cross breaks off in her hand.

EXT. TYRONE'S BROWNSTONE - DUSK

Two officers knock on the door. Tyrone's girlfriend answers, wearing a tight red dress and holding a cigarette in one hand, a bottle of beer in the other. She is laughing - until she sees the officers. She yells over her shoulder

TYRONE'S GIRLFRIEND
Tyrone!

INT. CHURCH BASEMENT

THE CROSS is on the floor near the candle. The candle burns to the end, and blows out. Joseph, with Mary sleeping on his chest, checks his watch in the light of the dim bulb. He wakes Mary gently.

JOSEPH
Time to go, baby.

I/E. TYRONE'S BROWNSTONE

Tyrone shuts the door as the officers walk back down the steps of the brownstone.

He storms down the hallway and into the living room, where his girlfriend sits drinking another beer.

TYRONE'S GIRLFRIEND

What is it, baby?

TYRONE

That fuckin' son of a bitch betrayed me. I KNEW we couldn't trust him for shit.

He goes into the kitchen, takes a gun off the counter.

TYRONE (CONT'D)

I will blow his fuckin' head off.

He rushes back into the hallway where he grabs his coat off a rack. His girlfriend follows him.

TYRONE (CONT'D)

Cops asking all these questions, digging around my business. That mother-FUCKER.

TYRONE'S GIRLFRIEND

(trying to stop him)

Tyrone!

He pushes her away. She bounces against the wall. He looks out the window, sees that the patrol car is gone, and bursts out the front door into the

EXT. STREET

He looks both ways, then heads to the subway.

An AGENT in an nearby unmarked car picks up the radio.

AGENT

I've got him. He's heading north.

He gets out of the car, shoves his hands in his pockets, and follows Tyrone.

EXT. HARLEM - NIGHT

Joseph and Mary come up from the subway station in Harlem and walk down the street. It's a main street, too well-lit. Joseph turns down the first side street he can find.

JOSEPH

Let's go this way instead.

They walk a few steps, then Mary falters, frightened. Joseph stops, kneeling before her.

JOSEPH (CONT'D)

What's the matter, baby?

No answer. She looks around, remembering something.

JOSEPH (CONT'D)

Don't be scared. I'm not gonna let anything happen to you. We're just gonna drop off this bag and get us some money, and then we're gonna take a bus or a train somewhere and find us another place to live. A better place, okay baby? A better place.

Mary nods, and wipes a tear from her eye. Joseph gives her a quick kiss, then checks his watch.

JOSEPH (CONT'D)

Come'on, we gotta go.

Passing an open alley lit by bare light bulbs, they see A WOMAN standing against the wall. It's Mary's mother Meshelle, though she's hard to recognize. She is even more strung out than before, and now she's dirty too.

Crouched in the alley by trash bags that appear to contain their possessions - MARY'S LITTLE BROTHER. He's got the vacant eyes of a kid who's seen way too much. He plays mindlessly with a stick in a pool of water - or urine.

Joseph quickly pushes Mary behind him as Meshelle approaches.

MESHELLE

You wanna Christmas fuck? Huh?
Cock suck? Come'on. Want your dick
licked? What? What you want?

Mary's brother looks up at Joseph, his eyes dead.

JOSEPH
 (to both the situation and
 to Meshelle's questions)
 No. . . No. . . No.

MESHELLE
 Come'on. Lemme do something. I
 gotta feed my kid. Come'on,
 come'on, come'on.

She tries to pull him into the alley, and in doing so, pulls him away from Mary. Meshelle sees Mary for the first time.

Mary runs away from the light, into the shadows of the alley.

JOSEPH
 (horrified)
 No. . . no. . . no.

He spins around, toward Mary, toward her mother - he should do something, what should he do, what should he do?

What can he do? He stops spinning, and goes to Mary.

He need not worry - Meshelle is too far gone to recognize her own daughter. She focuses on Joseph instead.

MESHELLE
 (under her breath)
 Mother-fucker.
 (seeing him looking back,
 she shouts)
 Mother-fucker!

She walks back to Mary's brother, and steps in the puddle on his stick. He starts to cry.

Joseph turns around again.

JOSEPH
 (to Mary)
 Wait here, baby.

He walks back to Meshelle.

MESHELLE
 Yea, I thought so, prick. You want
 some of this?
 (grabbing his crotch)
 Or do you want me to give you some
 of this?
 (grabbing her crotch)

Joseph reaches into his pocket and takes something out, which he places into her hands. He clasps his hands over hers, and looks at her intensely in the eyes, so intensely that she backs off a little.

MESHELLE

What the fuck is this?

JOSEPH

I've been where you've been,
sister. I've been here.

(nodding his head toward
the streets)

I was here for thirty years. I lost
my soul here.

She tries to pull away, but his gaze holds her. He continues, emphatically, as if both of their lives depended on it.

JOSEPH (CONT'D)

I lost my son because I was here.

Now she really tries to pull away.

JOSEPH (CONT'D)

(patting one hand over
their clasped hands)

She can help. She can help you be a
better woman. . . a better mother.
It's not too late.

(with kind eyes)

I've been here, and it's never too
late. Let her help.

He lets go of her hands, and walks away.

Mary's mother stares at him with shock. She opens her hands slowly - unfolding THE VIRGIN MARY STATUE. She looks like she might recognize it. Then she snaps out of it.

MESHELLE

You MOTHER-FUCKER! You mother-
fuckin' Jesus-freak!

She stomps the ground in a rage.

MESHELLE (CONT'D)

Go to hell, you fuckin' Jesus-
freak!

She throws the statue at him. It hits him in the back. Mary runs and picks it up. She runs back, takes Joseph's hand, and they walk down the street as Meshelle continues to rant.

MESHELLE (CONT'D)
I've been to hell, Jesus-freak.
This is hell. This is HELL!

EXT. ABYSSINIAN BAPTIST CHURCH - NIGHT

Joseph and Mary walk up the street to the church. Joseph checks his watch. He guides Mary toward the back alley.

The empty lot is dark except for some motion detector lights that go off when Joseph and Mary enter the lot, illuminating the dumpster. Joseph leads Mary there.

He puts down the duffel bag.

JOSEPH
Sit behind this.
(she sits)
When I go out to give the man this bag, I want you to stay hiding behind this, you hear me? Just stay hiding, okay? And then I will come back and find you. Like hide and seek!

He delivers the last line with a smile, trying to make it seem like a game. Mary nods.

EXT. ABYSSINIAN BAPTIST CHURCH - A LITTLE LATER

Tyrone walks down the street and past the church. His brother, the Deacon, looks out the window, and nods at Tyrone. The Deacon leaves the window, and misses seeing the agent walking 30 feet behind Tyrone.

Down the block a few houses, Tyrone turns into a small alley. He goes through a gate, and ends up on the other side of the empty lot from where Joseph and Mary hide behind the dumpster. He hides behind the side of the church, pulls out his gun, and waits.

The agent stops at the gate, and pulls out his radio.

INT. BROOKLYN POLICE STATION

First Officer hangs up the phone. OTHER OFFICERS await his instructions.

FIRST OFFICER
 We've got him. Back of Abyssinian
 Baptist Church, empty lot. Harlem's
 moving in.

EXT. HARLEM POLICE PRECINCT

Six cars take off from the station.

EXT. HARLEM HELICOPTER PAD

A helicopter lifts up into the air.

EXT. ABYSSINIAN BAPTIST CHURCH

Joseph holds the Virgin Mary statue in his hand, while Mary
 holds each of the other three up to her in turn.

JOSEPH
 (as the Virgin, to Kuan
 Yin)
 Do you know who I am?

MARY
 (as Kuan Yin)
 You are my mother.

She lays Kuan Yin down to sleep.

INTERCUT with police cars pulling up silently in front of the
 church.

JOSEPH (CONT'D)
 (to the Statue of Liberty)
 Do you know who I am?

MARY
 You are my mother.

She lays the Statue of Liberty down to sleep.

Several police officers stay outside the church, while
 several move quietly through the alley Joseph took, opposite
 from where Tyrone is perched.

TYRONE
 (seeing police, and under
 his breath)
 Mother-fucker.

He pulls his gun.

Back to...

JOSEPH
 (to the Virgin of
 Guadalupe)
 Do you know who I am?

MARY
 You are my mother.

She lays the Virgin of Guadalupe down to sleep.

Suddenly Joseph hears someone whistling "Silent Night."

Behind the church, Tyrone stiffens, and aims his gun.

JOSEPH
 (to Mary now, as himself)
 Do you know who I am?

MARY
 You are my father.

He kisses Mary, then stands up. He motions for Mary to be quiet. He puts the Virgin Mary in his pocket, picks up the duffle bag.

A HOODED MAN crosses the far side of the lot, whistling.

Joseph steps out from behind the dumpster and walks into the middle of the lot. The motion detector lights go on, startling him.

THE HELICOPTER approaches. It frightens Joseph, who stands in the center of a square, with the police on one corner, Tyrone on the next, the whistling hooded man on the next, and Mary behind him. He turns toward the hooded man, who comes closer.

HOODED MAN
 Set the bag down.

Joseph sets it down, never looking at the man.

The police JUMP OUT from behind the church.

POLICE
 Police. Put your hands up.

The motion detector lights go out. Joseph puts his hands up, tripping them back on.

Mary startles, and sits up.

The helicopter comes closer.

TYRONE

Oh fuck.

The helicopter swoops in, turns all lights on Joseph.

Mary runs out from behind the dumpster toward Joseph. He turns toward her, and drops his hands to pick her up.

The police step forward. One yells. . .

POLICEMAN

Put your hands back up.

Joseph puts his hands back up. Mary clings to his legs, crying. All is commotion. The whistling man runs away. Tyrone keeps repeating. . .

TYRONE

Fuck. Fuck!

. . . and keeps his gun aimed at Joseph.

Joseph tries to turn back toward the police, but Mary has his legs trapped. They yell at her while slowly approaching.

POLICEMAN ON A MEGAPHONE

Mary, let go of him and move away.

She cries and clings harder.

MARY

NO! NO!

JOSEPH

Officers please. . . please wait.
 (looking down at Mary)
 Please Angel, move away. Please.
 Please baby.

He reaches into his pocket.

POLICEMAN ON A MEGAPHONE

He's got a gun!

POLICEMAN

Put your hands up NOW!

JOSEPH

(yelling over the
 helicopter)
 I have to give her something! Just
 let me give her something!

It's the Mary statue he reaches for in his pocket.

The HELICOPTER OFFICER aims down at Joseph.

HELICOPTER OFFICER
Put your hands up or we'll shoot.

Joseph slowly pulls his hand out of his pocket, raises his arm, when GUN SHOTS ring out. Tyrone has shot his gun and in the confusion, some of the police turn and shoot in his direction, while others shoot toward Joseph.

Just like Vietnam, his arms are out, though this time, he takes the bullets in his chest. His arms fall in slow motion as he lets go of the Mary statue. It tumbles through the air and falls to the ground.

Tyrone runs away.

From the POV of the helicopter, Joseph lays on his back, arms out cross-like, blood streaming from his chest. Mary cries at his feet. The police try to pull her off of him. The blood expands, pooling around the statue of Mary.

DISSOLVE TO:

EXT. BROOKLYN CHILDREN'S HOME - MORNING

The song "Mary" (lyrics following the screenplay) plays over the scene.

A police car pulls up, and Fatherly Officer opens the back door. He helps out Mary, who clutches her pink backpack to her chest. He tries to take her hand to lead her up the sidewalk, but she refuses it.

EXT. BROOKLYN CEMETERY - DAY

Ida, John, Peter, and a few of Joseph's vet friends stand on one side of the casket, and Mary One, Mary Two, and Miss Luna stand on the other side. Miss Luna tries to be stoic, but the twins are hysterical. They put roses on Joseph's casket, and all three walk away together.

INT. BROOKLYN CHILDREN'S HOME - NIGHT

Mary lies in bed, staring at the blank white ceiling, tears streaming down her forlorn face.

INT. JOSEPH'S APARTMENT - NIGHT

The twin Marys enter Joseph's apartment, both carrying boxes. It is dark, except for some lights that call them into the

BEDROOM

where they find the room lit up still from Christmas Eve. They turn slowly around, taking in the lights and all the Marys on the ceiling and walls.

THROUGH THE BEDROOM WINDOW

They see Ida. They both walk over to it. Ida sees these two fierce women looking at her with absolute disdain. They make sustained eye contact, then both Marys yank the curtain closed. Ida drops her eyes.

Mary One walks up to one of the pictures, and traces a finger over the mother and child. She removes a picture from the wall, and puts it in the box.

Mary Two goes over to the bedside table. She picks up each piece of furniture Joseph made, turns them over in her hand, and places them in the box.

INT. BROOKLYN CHILDREN'S HOME - GAME ROOM - DAY

Mary sits at a table with a puzzle on it. Her four statues sit in front of her, and she stares vacantly at them.

Suddenly, her Virgin Mary statue is beside them. It takes Mary a minute to awaken from her trance and then. . .

MISS LUNA appears, kneeling down beside her. Mary turns, looks at her, then throws her arms around her teacher.

INT. BROOKLYN CHILDREN'S HOME - OFFICE - DAY

A WOMAN sits behind a plaque that reads "Monica Herrera, Adoption Services." Across the desk sits Miss Luna, with Mary on her lap. The woman slides a form across the desk.

The form reads "Application for Foster Care" and underneath that, "Adoption Option." Where it reads "Last name" she writes "Luna." Where it reads "First name" she writes. . .

"Maria."

INT. MARIA LUNA'S KITCHEN - NIGHT

SPANISH RICE circles the table. Maria Luna passes it to Mary, who passes it to Mary One, who passes it to Mary Two, who sets it down by Maria Luna. The mood is one of attempted cheer, with real moments sometimes breaking through.

INT. MARIA LUNA'S SPARE BEDROOM - THAT NIGHT

Mary lies in bed, cat curled up beside her. She is kissed good night by Mary One, who turns and leaves, then by Mary Two, who follows, then by Maria. Mary's eyes stay open, staring at the door.

Maria Luna blows her another kiss good night, then closes the door slightly. Mary smiles sweetly at her as the light on her face from the door narrows.

Her eyes shift to the bedside table, where slowly revealed, one by one, are the statue of the Virgin of Guadalupe. . .

the statue of Kuan Yin. . .

the Statue of Liberty. . .

the statue of the African goddess. . .

the original Mary statue. . .

and, finally...

the Polaroid picture of Mary between Miss Luna and Joseph, flanked by the Marys.

FADE OUT.

LYRICS TO "Mary" by Patti Griffin

Mary, you're covered in roses
You're covered in ashes
You're covered in rain
You're covered in babies
You're covered in slashes
You're covered in wilderness
You're covered in stains

You cast aside the sheet
You cast aside the shroud
Of another man, who served the world proud
You greet another son, you lose another one
On some sunny day and always stay, Mary

Jesus says mother I couldn't stay another day longer
Flys right by me and leaves a kiss upon her face
While the angels are singin' his praises in a blaze of glory
Mary stays behind and starts cleaning up the place

Mary she moves behind me
She leaves her fingerprints everywhere
Everytime the snow drifts
Everytime the sand shifts
Even when the night lifts
She's always there

Mary you're covered in roses
You're covered in ruin
You're covered in secrets
You're covered in treetops
You're covered in birds
Who can sing a million songs without any words

You cast aside the sheets
You cast aside the shroud
Of another man, who served the world proud
You greet another son, you lose another one
On some sunny day and always stay
Mary...Mary...Mary.