

ALL ABOUT STEVE

Written by

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TNT. KITCHEN - DAY

A New York Times crossword puzzle. The hand of MARY HOROWITZ scratches the answers in ink without pausing even a second between each one.

MARY (V.O.)

Vita aenigma est. Life is a puzzle. It is. Specifically, life is most like a crossword puzzle. There are a million reasons why, not the least of which is that life, like crosswords, requires the use of your whole entire brain- Her writing hand knocks a glass of grape soda and it spills all over the puzzle.

MARY

Crap.
The puzzle answers all run together.

INT. SCHOOL HALLWAY - DAY

Ten plastic folding chairs line the hallway -- all empty except for one.
In the last chair sits Mary Horowitz, 31, in her best synthetic cardigan, somebody's grandmother's skirt, her own red rubber boots. Genius meets retard. She mumbles to herself.

MARY

Four letter word for... vomit.
She takes a deep breath to calm her nerves. it doesn't help.

MARY

Not "barf". For sure not "barf".
That's too easy. "Puke" is okay, but maybe a bit pedestrian (that means boring)... I like "hurl". I do. I like the way it rolls off your tongue -- the word, I mean. But my all time favorite is none of those.
She puts her head between her knees, tries to keep it together.

2.

MARY

Four letter word for vomit? S-P-E-W.
Spew... Sp-ew.

A door nearby opens but Mary doesn't budge. A POLICE OFFICER walks out.
A 40ish female TEACHER pokes her head out the door, signals to Mary.

TEACHER

We're ready for you now.
(a plastic Kroger shopping
Mary jumps up, grabs her purse
bag).

MARY

Jesus help me.

INT. CLASSROOM - DAY

Mary stands in front of the chalkboard, "CAREER DAY" written in huge letters behind her. She smiles with terror at the class of 10 year old KIDS.
The Teacher reads from her notes.

TEACHER

Here's a treat, students. Our
final guest for Career Day, Miss
Mary Horowitz, is the crossword
constructor for the Atlanta
Citizen. You know the crossword
puzzles you see every week in the
newspaper? It's her job to create
them. Isn't that fun?
Mary stares at the Teacher, whispers.

MARY

You weren't supposed to tell them.

TEACHER

Pardon me?

MARY

I made a crossword puzzle to help
them guess what my job is. You
ruined it.

TEACHER

Oh, I'm so sorry.

3.

Mary takes the crossword puzzles out of her bag, looks at them like lost puppies.

TEACHER

Maybe you could tell them a bit
about what your job is like?
watche s hit

GARBAGE

Mary drops the p file out her
the bottom She p lls
u hearsed enthusiasm.
bag, reads with re

MARY

People do crossword puzzles all the
time but they don't often think of
the person who made all the words
fit together, and who thought up
the clues, and who made sure the
little black squares at the top
mirror the ones at the bottom.
She pulls one of the crosswords out of the garbage can, holds
it up, turns it upside down, forces a nervous smile.

MARY

Crossword constructors usually have above average intelligence, with knowledge of just about every subject you can imagine. And it helps if they can spell. The card in Mary's hand reads "LAUGH". She laughs. Nobody else does. She looks at the cards again, instantly gets serious, sweeps her hand through the air.

MARY

Imagine, for a moment, a world without crossword puzzles. A world- Mary notices one Kid with his hand up. It totally throws her off.

TEACHER

Daniel, you have a question?

DANIEL

You make a living doing that? Just making puzzles? The Atlanta Citizen only comes out on Fridays. One puzzle a week can't make you enough to live on. A LARGE KID in the front row pipes up.

4.

LARGE KID

How do you pay your rent?

MARY

My parents -

DANIEL

You live with your parents? The Kids all laugh their asses off. Mary just stares at them.

LARGE KID

Oh my God, how old are you? Still living at home! The kids all laugh some more. Mary's on the verge of panic.

TEACHER

Children! The Teacher shoots the Kids a warning look, then notices Mary hyperventilating.

TEACHER

Are you okay? Mary grasps for breath, struggles to speak.

MARY

Water.

TEACHER

Water. Just hang on. The Teacher rushes out. The kids all stare at Mary.

MARY

Yep, I live at home... She forces herself to get it together, totally faking it.

MARY

But so do all of you, so there... And sure, I only create one crossword puzzle a week but I have deadlines, I have stress, I have demands on me so huge you would not believe. The newspaper business is hell. I mean it. Hell. Somebody's got to write about all

the horrors that go on in this world.

(MORE)

5.

MARY (cont'd)

And after people read about those horrors, somebody else has to bring them back from the brink of suicide. Who do you think that is? She leans in close to the front row, scares herself more than anybody.

MARY

Me! My crossword puzzle is always good news. it enlightens. it r andma's entertains. It keeps your g mind alive so she remembers to send you five bucks on your birthday. Think about that as you lie in bed tonight picking your nose and crying yourself to sleep. I know I will. The Kids just stare at her. She leans against the teacher's desk, tries to look relaxed but fails miserably.

MARY

My job matters, you know. In media circles I am, as the Dutch say, geliefd. That means I have plenty of friends. Hoards, in fact. Scads even. The kids aren't buying it.

LARGE KID

You're a freak. The kids all nod in agreement. Mary's frozen, devastated. The Teacher rushes back into the room with a cup of water, hands it over. Mary sips it like communion wine. Half of it runs down her chin. Mary looks at the Teacher, fakes a smile.

MARY

That's a pretty blouse. The Teacher smiles back. Awkward.

EXT. SCHOOL -- DAY

The front doors of the school swing open and a visibly shaken Mary walks out. She takes a deep breath and embraces denial.

6.

MARY

Twelve letter phrase for smashing success! She heads down the walkway toward the bus stop.

MARY

As one would say in old Paris... Coup de maitre!

A CUSTODIAN cleaning the school yard looks up. Mary keeps on talking - now to him.

MARY

It means "master stroke", even though the direct translation is actually "master blow"... Leave it

to the French to pass off an unpleasant slave activity as an everyday expression. The Custodian doesn't know what the hell she's talking about. Mary continues on to the bus stop.

INT. CITY BUS -- DAY

The CITY BUS DRIVER watches as Mary pays her \$1.75 one nickel at a time.

MARY

I sometimes suffer from benign positional vertigo. Could you please not drive until I'm - f He ignores her, starts driving. Mary struggles toward the back o f the bus, grabbing g goes.

MARY

Excuse me... pardonnez-moi... begnadiyen sie mich... She lurches for an empty seat and just about dislodges her shoulder on the center pole. Finally settled, she peeks under her sweater at the shoulder damage.

MARY

Hello hematoma. She smiles at an angry ELDERLY LADY sitting across from her. The lady gives her the "don't talk to me" glare, then stares out the window. Mary fidgets in her seat.

7.

MARY (V.O.)

In crosswords, as in life, some days are harder than others. It's true. In the New York Times, for example, the puzzles get harder as the week goes. So on Monday, a day that traditionally bites the big one, the crossword is super easy. It's comforting to know that although life can be difficult at times, crosswords let you off easy when you need it the most. Mary looks around for anybody to talk to. The other PASSENGERS avert their eyes. Mary starts biting her nails.

EXT. NEWSSTAND - DAY

A frail 80 year old man MR. TAKIHASHI works alongside his wspapers, 40ish granddaughter BETTY selling magazines, ne smokes and Pocky. In the corner of the newsstand, a muted TV features CNN "Breaking News" coverage of a high speed car chase. BUSINESSMEN are glued to the images as they wait in line. Mary grabs a half a dozen different newspapers, yells to Mr. Takihashi like he's deaf.

MARY

KONCHA, TAKIHASHI-SAN!

He ignores her. Mary hands the papers to Betty.

MARY

Hi Betty. Betty just rings up the papers.

MARY

Did you see the review of "Hairspray" in the Journal

yesterday? They used the word
"spectacular" -- always a good
sign. Maybe you'd like to go see
it with rne? I have a coupon for
five dollars off.
Betty shoves the newspapers back across the counter, points
at them, then speaks in barely recognizable English.

S.

BETTY

Nine dollar twenty.
Mary fishes in her bag for money.

MARY

We could bring your dad if you
want. I don't think the show is
ageist. That means he won't feel
like a loser for being old.
As she takes her time paying, Mr. Takihashi madly gestures
about Mary holding up the line. Betty barks at her.

BETTY

Pecha kucha! Do Itta!
Betty takes Mary's money, waves her on and helps the next
customer.

MARY

So no then? That's a no?
Betty ignores her. Mary waits, loads the newspapers into her
bag.

MARY (V.O.)

Sometimes crosswords are even
better than life. Here's how.
They don't discriminate.
Crosswords don't care if you're
young or old; black or white; male,
female or intersex. Crosswords
only care if you're an idiot. And,
really, that's okay, because if you
have the IQ of a yam, finishing a
crossword should be the least of
your worries.
Mary glances up at the TV news once more, then walks away.

INT. CNN LOADING BAY - DAY

A half dozen NEWS CREWS rush to load and unload CNN news ECHS --
vans. JOURNALISTS, PHOTOGRAPHERS,
PRODUCERS, SOUNDyT
all in a mad rush to go get
An unshaven and surprisingly calm STEVE balances camera
equipment in one hand while he scratches a barely legible
"Steve" onto a clipboard. A young PA takes the clipboard,
hands Steve a bunch of gas masks.

9.

50'S

Steve heads to an open van where a disheveled, mid
producer ANGUS MCCORMACK checks his watch.

ANGUS

Where the hell is he?

STEVE

Probably doing his nails.
-- paper

40ish reporter HARTMAN HUGHES rushes to the van on his face.
napkin tucked in his shirt collar, bread crumbs

HARTMAN

What do you mean "the big one"?
Terrorists, natural disaster, what?

ANGUS

Pandemic.
Hartman's eyes light up.

ANGUS

Half of the Midwest and spreading.
Nobody's safe.
Steve tries on a gas mask.

HARTMAN

Please let it be the bird flu.

STEVE

Bird flu is for pussies. This
thing's unstoppable.

HARTMAN

How's it spreading?
Angus looks at Steve.

STEVE

Squirrels.
Hartman can barely contain his excitement.

HARTMAN

Oh my God, they're everywhere!

STEVE

Exactly.

HARTMAN

Al Qaeda connection?

10.

ANGUS

Always a possibility.

STEVE

Who wishes he was in Iraq now?

HARTMAN

Not me!.
Hartman grabs a gas mask and rushes to the van's side mirror.

HARTMAN

I need blush. No, wait. I'll go
pasty. It'll look like I could be
the first media victim. "Hartman
Hughes, no such thing as too close
to the story".
Hartman looks back at Steve and Angus. They're just standing
there, unable to keep a straight face. Hartman deflates.

HARTMAN

Assholes! I knew it was too good
to be true.
He throws his gas mask down, storms off.

ANGUS

Hartman, come on.
Hartman gets in the elevator, hollers out to them.

HARTMAN

I had a perfectly good bologna
sandwich going on upstairs.

Wasted!

Angus and Steve watch the elevator door close, shrug it off.

STEVE

Next E-coli story breaks, he'll be fine.

EXT. HOROWITZ HOUSE - DAY

An 1890 Colonial Revival home surrounded by White Oaks. Oversized statue of the Blessed Virgin in the flower bed. Mezuzah on the door. Face still in the newspaper, Mary trips up the steps and skids onto the porch. Her knee starts to bleed.

11.

MARY

Crap.

INT. HOROWITZ HOUSE - DAY

It's house that's been lived in. Every inch cluttered with old newspapers, family photos, various objet d'art, and books, books and more books.

Mary steps out of her boots and marches into the living room where her 50ish mother, MRS. HOROWITZ, sits reading with MR. HOROWITZ (late 50's, professorial head to toe, furrowed brow to worn loafers).

MARY

"Brilliant" is what they said. Never in the history of St. Margaret's Career Day have the children's brains been so inordinately stimulated as they were today by my presentation.

MRS. HOROWITZ

Good for you, sweetie. Mary pulls the newspapers out of her bag, sorts through them, stacks them on top of the TV.

MARY

"Inspired", the teacher told me.

MR. HOROWITZ

You get the Post?
She hands him the paper.

MARY

"Engrossing" one child exclaimed.

MR. HOROWITZ

A ten year old said that?

MARY

I'm sure that's what he meant. And "ebullient"-

MR. HOROWITZ

What happened to your knee?
Mary looks down at the blood dripping down from her knee onto her sock. She's completely annoyed - more at the question than the mess.

12.

MARY

Dad, some of the greatest orators of all time had their heads chopped off for their labors. I'm lucky to escape with a simple flesh wound. Mary hands over the last newspaper, heads out to the hallway. Her mother yells to her.

MRS. HOROWITZ

Change those socks before your date.

MARY

I told you I'm not going.

MRS. HOROWITZ

Mrs. Alchessi says you'll like this one.

MARY

Mrs. Alchessi has gliomatosis cerebri.

MRS. HOROWITZ

What?

MARY

A brain tumor characterized by, among other things, dementia. She's nuts. Mary walks up the stairs.

MRS. HOROWITZ

Mary, it's just a date. This is what normal girls your age do. Mary stops on the stairs.

MARY

I'm normal. Silence from her parents. Mary marches back into the living room.

MARY

In fact, I'm normalis extremes. That's the kind of normal that doesn't get more normal.

MRS. HANCOCK

Of course you are, sweetie.

13.

Mary looks at her obviously lying mother and uncomfortable father. Mary's mind reels, like her head is going to explode. Finally, a determination hits her.

MARY

I'll go. Mary bolts up the stairs to her room. Mr. and Mrs. Horowitz look at each other, surprised, happy.

MR. HOROWITZ

You ever want to see grandchildren, you better burn the damn boots. She swats him with her book, tries not to laugh.

INT. HOROWITZ HOUSE - MARY'S ROOM - NIGHT

Storage room or bedroom? Boxes and books all over the place. In the middle of it all, a bed. On the dresser, a bunch of photos of Mary Tyler Moore in the - MTM in a 1970's. Taped to the mirror, the chosen photo Horowitz smart blue sweater and skirt ensemble. An wears the exact same outfit. Oddly, surprisingly current and actually hot.

She leans over the gerbil cage next to her desk, taps to wake up the :Lone, fat occupant.

MARY

Carol, tonight I have a date. A blind one. Not the guy, I mean the situation. We are, as yet, unknown to one another... It's nerve wracking, I know. Try not to have a spontaneous epileptiform seizure. The doorbell rings. Mary freezes, listens for the muffled voices downstairs. She sits on the corner of her bed and breathes rapidly into a paper bag. There's a knock on her bedroom door. Mary folds up the bag, puts it in her pocket for later, then opens the door a crack. It's her mother.

MRS. HOROWITZ

Guess who's here.

14.

MARY

I'd rather not. Mrs. Horowitz opens the door wider, takes a look at Mary, looks like she's going to cry.

MRS. HOROWITZ

Look at you.

MARY

i already did. Repeatedly.

MRS. HOROWITZ

You're beautiful.

MARY

Please don't mean on the inside.

MRS. HOROWITZ

Beautiful and smart. And fun. And interesting. Mary takes a deep breath, lets it out fast.

MARY

Let's hope all that does it for him.

INT. HOROWITZ HOUSE - HALLWAY - NIGHT

A bored, CNN jacket wearing Steve looks up to see Mrs. Horowitz descending the stairs. Not far behind, Mary takes each step like her knees are fused together but still manages to look hot. Steve's pleasantly surprised. With one look at Steve, Mary's eyes glaze over as if a choir is screaming "hallelujah" in her brain. As Mary reaches the bottom step --

STEVE

Mary, hi. I'm Steve. She puts up a finger - "just a second". She turns around and runs back upstairs. Steve looks at Mrs. Horowitz, confused.

MRS. HOROWITZ

And how's your mother?

15.

STEVE

Great. Thanks.
She just stares at him and smiles.

INT. HOROWITZ HOUSE - MARY'S ROOM - NIGHT

Mary runs into her room, kneels down in front of the mizrach and crucifix on the wall. Hands clasped in prayer.

MARY

Gods. You may have noticed that
I'm wearing clean socks.
Translation: I'm really trying and
thus should be amply rewarded.
Thanks for your support.
She gets up, has a second thought, gets back onto her knees.

MARY

And by support I don't mean, you
know -
She hikes up her bra.

MARY

I mean your assistance, your
furtherance, your advocacy of my
efforts to get out there and... do
what I'm supposed to do.
She concentrates hard, opens her eyes. Now she's ready.

INT. HOROWITZ HOUSE - HALLWAY - NIGHT

Steve waits as Mary walks down the stairs again, this time a bit more relaxed.

MRS. HOROWITZ

There we go.
Mary makes it to the bottom of the stairs, steps into her red boots. Her mother cringes. Steve's a bit surprised at the boots but who cares, Mary's still hot from the knee caps up.

STEVE

Ready?
Mary nods a bunch of times.

16.

STEVE

Mrs. Horowitz. Goodnight.
(calling into living room)
Sir.

MR. HOROWITZ (O.S.)

You kids have fun.

MRS. HOROWITZ

Be careful now. Don't forget your
seatbelts.
Mrs. Horowitz sees them out the door then heads into the living room. She waves to them out the window, trying to hide her worry but failing miserably.

MR. HOROWITZ

She'll be fine.
They look at each other - a bit of hope, a bit of dread.

EXT. STREET - NIGHT

Steve unlocks the driver's side door of his SUV while Mary waits at her door, nervous but smiling.

STEVE

Sorry about this blind date thing.

My mother -

MARY

I never went to kindergarten!
He looks at her, totally confused.

MARY

They skipped me to the forth grade.

STEVE

Okay.
She gets in the car, fastens her seatbelt. Steve hesitates
then heads to the driver's side, gets in.

MARY

I missed finger painting.
He has no clue what to say.

STEVE

Sorry?

17.

MARY

Me too.
She lunges for his lips but the seatbelt snaps her back
inches short.

STEVE

Whoa!
Undeterred by the whiplash, Mary undoes her seatbelt and
tries again, this time making contact with Steve's lips.
He's more than a little startled but kisses her back anyway,
all the while straining to see the Horowitz house.

STEVE

Mary... uh, what about your mother?
She straddles him and keeps kissing.

MARY

You're not her type. And she's
married.

STEVE

No, we're right in front of your
house and...
She undoes her sweater.

STEVE

And I have no problem with that
whatsoever.
She kisses his neck. He looks up with a "thank you, God".

MARY

Steve?

STEVE

Mary.

MARY

Is it Steven with a V or Stephen
with a P-H?

STEVE

V.

She works over his face over like it's an ice cream cone.

18.

MARY

I thought so. There are almost a million Stevens with a V in the country, you know. It's much more popular than the P-H way, almost twice as popular in fact. I think it's the Brits who prefer the P-H. They love their P-H's over there. Not as much as they love their fish and chips but still, they love them. It was the media thing, you know, that's why our moms wanted us to get together. You work in the media, so do I. We really have to hand it to our moms, Steve, we do, and not just for raising us, or for thriving during a time when women painstakingly struggled for equality, but I mean we should hand it to them for being visionaries and predicting our all encompassing compatibility. We're professionally compatible, yes, but it's occurring to me at this particular moment that we're also sexually compatible, and I don't know if you noticed like I noticed but we're also both wearing blue. What are the chances of that? Actually, if I really think about it, the chances are probably pretty good. Blue is one of the most popular three colors, however, yours is-

She leans forward and checks the fabric tag on the neck of his jacket. She can't quite read it. She reaches up and flips on the interior light. Steve's just about blinded. She grabs the tag, reads.

MARY

Nylon. And mine...

She grabs her own tag and reads it, just about elbowing Steve in the eye.

MARY

Polyester! See? Both synthetic fibres! And the chances of that are much smaller than the chances of us just wearing blue. Steve looks at Mary - suddenly fully aware of her craziness.

19.

MARY

Do you like crosswords?

STEVE

Sure.

She just about jumps out of her pants with excitement.

MARY

Me too! And semantics, the study of the meaning of words? You love words, right?

STEVE

What's not to love.

MARY

I know!

She can hardly believe her good fortune. Her mind reels just as fast as her lips.

MARY

Steve with a V, you know what we are? We're didymous. Two of a kind. Two rare earth elements brought together by Norms, that's Scandinavian for The Destinies. You want to make out for ten to fifteen minutes more then go get a six pack of Twinkies and Mountain Dew and stay up all night and talk? Steve is frozen. No escape - then it hits him. He jumps a bit, pulls out his cell phone.

STEVE

Sorry. I have to get this.

MARY

I didn't hear it ring.

STEVE

Vibrate.

MARY

I didn't feel it

STEVE

You didn't?
(into phone)
This is Steve... What? Really?
Now? If I don't have a choice...

20.

He hangs up, looks at Mary like he feels bad.

STEVE

Work. I have to go to... Boston.
This happens all the time. You know how it is. Wherever news happens...
Mary gets off of him, slides back into her seat, buttons her sweater.

MARY

It's okay. When you get back we can have plenty of quality time.

STEVE

Sure. I'll call you.
He leans over, opens her door.

MARY

Steve, this has been a night to remember.

STEVE

No kidding. You certainly are -
He searches for any word that will do. Mary jumps in.

MARY

Normal.

STEVE

You read my mind.
Never happier, she jumps out of the car.
As he drives away, she pulls the paper bag out of her pocket, breathes into it.

INT. HOROWITZ HOUSE - NIGHT

Mary's parents hear the door open then Mary's footsteps hit the stairs. Mrs. Horowitz jumps up, rushes to meet her.

MRS. HOROWITZ

Sweetie, what's wrong? What happened? My God, you've barely been gone ten minutes. Mary stops on the stairs, turns back.

21.

MARY

Mom, sometimes that's all you need to know he's the one! Mary smiles big, takes the rest of the stairs up two at a time. Mrs. Horowitz is about to follow her.

MR. HOROWITZ

That girl makes up her mind the moon is green, it's green. Leave her be. It'll pass. Eventually. Mrs. Horowitz moves away from the stairs, no less worried.

INT. HOROWITZ HOUSE - MARY'S ROOM - NIGHT

Mary leaps from the doorway and lands on her bed in pencil pose, smiling up at the ceiling.

MARY

Eleven letter word for serendipity. She screams into her pillow.

MARY

The perfect answer: S-E-R-E-N-D-I-P-I-T-Y. Serendipity. Why would you ever need a better word than that? She sits up, grabs her notebook, starts to draw out a new crossword puzzle.

- DAY

INT. ATLANTA CITIZEN NEWSPAPER OFFICES

A busy newspaper office. COURIERS make deliveries, JOURNALISTS talk at their desks, SECRETARIES count the minutes until they can go home. In the Editor's office, JIM SOLOMAN looks over the newspaper layout with an ASSISTANT.

SOLOMAN

Let's split the gardening feature into two weeks. Keep them in suspense. He steps back, looks at the whole layout.

SOLOMAN

Looks good. How are we doing here?

22.

He checks his watch.

SOLOMAN

Five minutes to spare. Look at that. The Assistant points to a blank corner of page 26. Soloman's surprised, and not particularly impressed.

SOLOMAN

Horowitz.

INT. ATLANTA CITIZEN BUILDING - ELEVATOR - DAY

Mary stands at the front of the full elevator, smiling, a piece of paper gripped in her hand.

MARY (V.O.)

When I was a fledgling (that means novice) crossword constructor, I would find comfort in the words of the learned crossword sages. Above all, my hero is Manny Nosowsky, frequent New York Times contributor and all around cruciverbial master.

INT. ATLANTA CITIZEN NEWSPAPER OFFICES - DAY

Mary walks out of the elevator and heads through the office. Nobody seems to notice her.

MARY (V.O.)

Manny says that a crossword puzzle's greatness can be determined by asking three simple questions. She marches in the direction of the Editor's office.

MARY (V.O.)

Is it solvable?
She almost collides with a mail cart but keeps walking.

MARY (V.O.)

Is it entertaining?
She arrives at the Editor's office, plants her feet in the doorway.

23.

MARY (V.O.)

Does it s arkle?
She looks down at the crossword puzzle in her hands, smiles, holds it out for Soloman.
Soloman grabs the crossword and hands it right to the Assistant, who rushes it out the door.

INT. HAIR SALON - DAY

Two OLD LADIES sit under the hair dryers, each doing the Atlanta Citizen crossword puzzle. They're stumped. The first Old Lady hollers over the noise of the dryer.

OLD LADY

I CAN'T GET ANY OF THESE!

The other Old Lady holds up her blank crossword, shrugs.

INT. TAXI - DAY

The TAXI DRIVER sits in the parked taxi doing the crossword.

TAXI DRIVER

This is bullshit.

INT. STARBUCKS - DAY

A

A long haired GUY gets up from his seat, puts his coat on. male EXECUTIVE sits down and spots the newspaper opened to the crossword puzzle.

GUY

Don't even bother, man. I don't know what the deal is, but it looks like all the answers are --

INT. ATLANTA CITIZEN - EDITOR'S OFFICE - DAY

Soloman holds up the crossword page.

SOLOMAN

Steve?
Mary sits and smiles.

24.

SOLOMAN

Every single answer is "Steve"?
Who the hell is Steve anyway? No
wait, I don't care, but I do care
that you pissed off our readers.
Mary's smile falls a bit.

SOLOMAN

I thought you knew better than to
pull something like this. It's
unprofessional, it's --
to him.
He's too frustrated, the words aren't coming

MARY

Romantic?

SOLOMAN

No!

MARY

Creativo? That's Italian for
"creative".

SOLOMAN

No.

MARY

How about -

SOLOMAN

Mary. We're letting you go.

MARY

Oh.
up her Kroger
She looks like she's going to cry. She picks
bag, fidgets.

MARY

Maybe I could make it up to you by
doing a fishing themed crossword.
I know how you love the
piscatology.
Soloman shakes his head -- it's done.
Mary hesitates then finally gets up.

MARY

Okay. I'll just give you some time
then. We'll talk next week.

25.

He ignores that. She walks out, seemingly content, a bit of
denial.
A PAYROLL CLERK sees the elevator doors close behind Mary.

PAYROLL CLERK

She forgot her severance.

ASSISTANT

Don't you mean "Steverance"?
They both laugh.

EXT. HOROWITZ HOUSE - DAY

Mary walks up to the front steps where Mr. Horowitz sits

THE

waiting for her. She sits down beside him. He holds up
Atlanta Citizen crossword.

MR. HOROWITZ

Interesting way to go.

MARY

Indeed.

MR. HOROWITZ

They like it?
She points to the other newspaper in his lap.

MARY

Finished with the Times?
She goes to take the paper. He stops her.

MR. HOROWITZ

Neshama, the puzzle. How'd it go?
She looks around. Nowhere to run.

MARY

How do you think?
She looks at him -- worry all over his face. She hesitates
for a moment then sucks it up.

MARY

Because if you're thinking that
they loved it, that they thought it
was imaginative and bold and
evocative... you would be right.

26.

He's not sure how to take that.

MR. HOROWITZ

And Steve?

MARY

He works a lot, you know. Travels
all the time. 'Tis possible he has
not yet espied it.
She picks up the crossword, admires it.

MARY

But when he does, I'm sure he'll
say, "that Mary Horowitz... is a
catch. Where oh where has she been
all my empty life? From here
onward my life will be divided into
'before I met Mary' and 'after I
met Mary' with the second part
being far superior. I am lonely no
more. The missing letter in my
puzzle has at last been found."

MR. HOROWITZ

I don't want you getting your hopes
up too much.

MARY

I'm not.

INT. CNN ATLANTA - DAY

An exec office. Steve relaxes on the sofa next to Angus while Hartman noses around the office.

ANGUS

We're going to hit rush. We'll have to take the second flight. Exec. Producer DAN CORBITT walks in, heads straight for his desk.

CORBITT

You're set. KDFW's on site now. Angus and Steve start to get up.

CORBITT

Hang on. They sit. Corbitt grabs the remote control, turns the TV on.

27.

CORBITT

Anybody want to tell me about this? He fast forwards through footage of Hartman reporting from a greenhouse. Corbitt slows it to normal speed, mutes it. They watch as Hartman interviews an attractive female BOTANIST holding a test tube with a seedling in it. Hartman keeps pointing to the seedling - which happens to be right in front of the Botanist's generous breasts. The camera gets closer and closer - each time it pulls away Hartman points to the seedling again to force the camera in close - basically turning the piece into a giant boob-fest.

ANGUS

Take a look at those... plants. Corbitt pauses it on the worst shot, looks at Steve.

CORBITT

We can't use this. Hartman fakes disgust.

HARTMAN

Of course not. Nice camera work, Stevie. Steve glares at Hartman. Corbitt points at the frozen shot on the TV screen, looks at Steve.

CORBITT

You want to go back to the Weather Channel, try that again. Corbitt checks his watch, points them out the door.

CORBITT

Get out of here. Don't embarrass me in Dallas. Hartman, Angus and Steve walk out. Steve nods to Hartman - thanks asshole. In the hallway, Steve's cell phone rings. He answers it.

STEVE

What?... Mom, let me call you back.

28.

He listens, signals to Angus he needs a minute, then stops at a reception area. He sorts through the newspapers, pulls out the Atlanta Citizen, flips through it.

STEVE

What page?

He finds Mary's crossword. He looks at it closely, totally confused. It takes him more than a second to get it. He laughs -- then suddenly reality sets in.

STEVE

Jesus.

INT. HOROWITZ HOUSE - BATHROOM - NIGHT

Mary does a crossword while soaking in the bathtub. Without missing an answer, she reaches over the side of the tub, grabs the telephone on the floor. She checks the dial tone, hangs up quickly, continues with the puzzle.

MARY

Four letter word for am I going to wait my whole life for Steve to call?
She suddenly stops writing.

MARY

Nope.
She flails out of the tub like a salmon heading upstream, grabs a towel barely big enough to cover her. Without any effort to dry off, she runs out of the bathroom.

INT. HOROWITZ HOUSE - HALLWAY / LIVING ROOM - NIGHT

Towel wrapped around her but barely covering, Mary reaches the top of the stairs. Her wet feet sliding all over the place, she opts for the safety of a banister slide. She gets up on it, slides a few inches before realizing what a bad idea it was.

MARY

Ow ow ouch.
She gets off the banister, slops the rest of the way down the stairs, jumps into the doorway of the living room.

29.

MARY

The news is Steve's life! It's not just what he does, it's who he is, imbedded deep down in his polymer of nucleotides. I should be out there by his side. That's what girlfriends do, isn't it? Let him concentrate on his work. I'll concentrate on the relationship. It won't be easy, I know, but neither is quantum physics or... the Heisenberg Uncertainty Principle or... paper mache, but I've managed to do fine with those, haven't I?
She looks at her parents. They sit at a table playing bridge with MR. and MRS. HANCOCK.

MRS. HOROWITZ

Mary, you remember the Hancocks.

MARY

Top of the evening.
Mr. Hancock checks out Mary's bare legs as she stands in a puddle of bath water. Mrs. Hancock lifts her husband's chin, snaps him out of it.

MRS. HANCOCK

Loved this week's puzzle, dear.
Whoever Steve is, he must be a very lucky young man.
Mr. Horowitz gives Mrs. Hancock a look - "don't encourage

her".

MARY

Exactly! And all I have to do is go to him, be near him, and do my best to radiate... me.
Mr. Horowitz doesn't like the sound of this.

MR. HOROWITZ

And where exactly will this radiation take place?
Mary rushes to the TV, turns it on, flips it to CNN.

ON THE TV:

30.

A shot of the Medieval Times castle in Dallas, TX. The banner on the screen reads "WORKPLACE KILLING".

MARY

Wherever news happens, Dad.
Wherever news happens.

EXT. GREYHOUND BUS STATION - ATLANTA - DAY

PASSENGERS board the bus destined for Dallas. Way too excited in her red boots, Mary is the last in line. She hugs her mother then jumps up onto the first step of the bus. Mr. Horowitz holds Mary's knapsack and Kroger bag, shakes his head in disbelief.

MR. HOROWITZ

This is nuts.
Mary takes the bags from him.

MARY

Abe, Catherine, I'm off. I don't know where I'm going -
The Greyhound Bus DRIVER hollers from behind her.

DRIVER

Dallas.

MARY

Geographically yes, I know.
Figuratively, philosophically, spiritually, much less so. My entire life is before me. The world is my ostrea edulis... That means the edible kind of oyster.

MRS. HOROWITZ

That's beautiful, sweetie. You sure you won't take mine instead?
She tries to switch her leather bag for Mary's Kroger bag.
Mary resists, points back and forth between the two bags.

MARY

Mom, two handles, two handles, they both hold stuff, what's the difference?
Mrs. Horowitz goes to explain, gives up.

31.

MR. HOROWITZ

That Steve shows any disrespect, you're on the next bus back here.

MARY

Disrespect. Do you mean
unmannerly, tactless, vulgar?
Because he's a straight man, Dad,
and some things can't be helped.
But if you mean inconsiderate to
me, contemptuous toward me,
insulting, irreverent, uncivil -

DRIVER

Let's go already!
She steps up one more step, yells out to her parents and the

WORLD:

MARY

I don't know when I'll be back but
I do know this-
The door shuts in her face.

INT. GREYHOUND BUS DAY

Mary waves to her worried parents through the closed door.

MARY

(to herself)
I'm not coming back alone.

EXT. MEDIEVAL TIMES - DALLAS - DAY

Local and national NEWS CREWS are camped across the road from
the Medieval Times castle. Among them, Steve holds the CNN
camera on Hartman. A young audio tech JOSH hovers nearby.

HARTMAN

Paula, what started out as a
routine rehearsal here at the
Dallas Medieval Times turned deadly
when an employee allegedly turned
on his fellow performers. Twenty-
four hours later, at least thirty
employees are still being held
hostage by the assailant, their
lives hanging in the balance.
He listens to his earpiece, nods.

32.

HARTMAN

The castle you see behind me is one
of eight medieval Times dinner
theatre restaurants. Guests who
cross the drawbridge enjoy a
medieval style feast while watching
the main attraction: knights
engaging in a battle of strength
and skill. The restaurant promises
"fun, feasting and fighting" but it
appears that this time, fun was in
short supply.
A few feet away, Angus frantically takes notes as he talks to
a MAINTENANCE WORKER, then slips a piece of paper to Hartman.

HARTMAN

Paula, devastating news just in.
We have one confirmed death - an
Andalusian - a purebred Spanish
horse. One of many that perform in
the show, and the first innocent
victim of a rogue knight's rage...
He takes a moment to fake compose himself, barely getting the
words out.

HARTMAN

At times like this, I like to think there's a heaven just for horses. A rolling meadow, lush grasses, unlimited supply of... those things horses like to lick - or is that cows? Nevertheless, a beautiful, peaceful place. He turns and looks toward to the Medieval Times.

HARTMAN

May you long roam in that heaven, noble horse - Angus hands him another note. Hartman scans it, instantly kills the fake anguish.

HARTMAN

But not quite yet. We're the first to report, the horse is not dead, Paula. Not dead. The horse is alive and well after having merely fainted, as it was trained to do for the show. One happy, blessed miracle...

(MORE)

33.

HARTMAN (cont'd)
while a deranged madman continues to hold the lives of his coworkers in his depraved hands. And they're out. A pissed off Hartman pulls out his earpiece.

HARTMAN

Dammit, Angus. Get it a bit closer to right before you hand it to me. Josh moves in, removes Hartman's mic.

STEVE

But then we wouldn't have heard about horse heaven. Josh and Angus laugh.

HARTMAN

It's that kind of genius that won me the Southeast Idaho Christian Family Coalition's Journalist of the Year award, you ingrates.

INT. GREYHOUND BUS - NIGHT

The bus is full. Most PASSENGERS sleep. Mary sits in the aisle seat of the first row, a BURLY MAN in his 60's beside her. The light above their seats illuminates the crossword puzzle he's working on. Mary looks over his shoulder, points to the blank spaces in his puzzle.

MARY

Omaha... Einstein... cholera... grenade... Bach... oui... potbelly... Oreo. The man drops the crossword, glares at her.

MARY

Sorry. She looks away, starts biting her nails, then spots a sign on the freeway, calls-out to the Driver and anybody else who will listen.

MARY

Bessemer, Alabama! Named after Sir

Henry Bessemer, a Brit. Guess what he did? Perfected the way steel is made, of course.

(MORE)

34.

MARY (cont'd)
I won't bore you with the whole story, just the best parts, like how it involves molten pig iron which does not, as one might think, have anything to do with pigs. It's actually a raw iron made from iron ore, plus limestone, plus coke - and by coke I mean the carbonaceous residue, not the cola, or the booger sugar.
Mary looks around for a response -- nothing.

MARY

You know what else is in Bessemer? The city, I mean? Hitler's typewriter. It's crazy, I know. That guy was such an asshole.
The Driver's eyes glaze over. Please let this and.

EXT. REST STOP - NIGHT

The bus pulls into the rundown rest stop.

INT. GREYHOUND BUS - NIGHT

The Driver looks at the passengers. Most of them are still sleeping.

DRIVER

We'll just take five minutes here.
He steps off the bus. Mary turns to the man next to her.

MARY

Can you watch my stuff?
He glares at her -- you have got to be kidding. Mary grabs her backpack and Kroger bag and steps off the bus.

INT. REST STOP - NIGHT

Mary walks into the restaurant, heads toward the ladies room. On her way, she spots a television behind the counter. A few DINERS watch. Mary joins them.
On the TV: "MEDIEVAL TIMES HOSTAGE CRISIS".

35.

HARTMAN

(on TV)
Perhaps the greatest obstacle the hostage negotiators face is the suspect's refusal to communicate using modern day technology. In keeping with his role as a medieval knight, he's insisting on an eleventh century messenger to deliver all communication.
The screen splits with a female news ANCHOR.

ANCHOR

What are we talking about here, Hartman? Carrier pigeons?

MARY

Homing pigeons.
A few of the Diners overhear.

HARTMAN

Actually, homing pigeons.
The Diners look at Mary.

MARY

Carrier pigeons, despite their name, are more or less useless when it comes to actually carrying anything. Homing pigeons are better for messenger work... The Diners lose interest. Mary catches the eye of a WANDERER at the end of the counter. He's hanging on her every word.

MARY

You know who used them all the time? Genghis Khan. Loved the pigeons, scared to death of pooches though.
The Wanderer just stares at her.

MARY

You know, dogs, canines, de honden?
Still nothing. She looks back at the TV.

36.

ANCHOR

Have the negotiators located any homing pigeons? Where do you even get them in this day and age?

HARTMAN

You can buy them on the internet for twenty-five bucks a pop.
Mary looks at the Diners, smiles, points to the TV.

MARY

My boyfriend is probably holding that camera right now.
The Diners ignore her and just eat their pie. Mary realizes the time, runs out of the rest stop.

EXT. REST STOP - NIGHT

Mary runs out into the parking lot. The bus is gone.

MARY

Crap! Crap, crap, crap!
She looks down the road -- no sign of the bus anywhere. She takes her paper bag out of her pocket, breathes into it.
A TRUCK DRIVER passes her with coffee in hand, on his way to his rig.

MARY

Do you know when the next bus to Dallas goes through here?

TRUCK DRIVER

Can't say I do.

MARY

I missed mine.
She breathes double time into the paper bag. He takes pity on her.

TRUCK DRIVER

I'm headed that way.
He points to his truck. Mary looks at the truck, looks at

him, looks at the truck, thinks about it for a long time.

37.

With no sign of an answer forthcoming, the Truck Driver keeps walking to his rig. When he's just about there, Mary yells out to him.

MARY

You ever killed animals?
He looks at her, surprised but amused.

TRUCK DRIVER

Road kill?

MARY

Set a garbage can full of kittens
on fire or anything like that?
Now he's disturbed.

TRUCK DRIVER

No.

MARY

Humans?

TRUCK DRIVER

Would I tell you if I did?

MARY

Touche, sir. Touche.
Mary thinks some more.

TRUCK DRIVER

Wait for the next bus if that suits
you.
He climbs into the truck. Mary runs to catch up with him.

MARY

Do you have a .light? Matches,
Zippo, blow torch, et al?

TRUCK DRIVER

Afraid not.

MARY

May I see your license?
Why not. He pulls his license out of the visor, flashes it.
Mary steps up and grabs it, looks at it closely.

MARY

Norman James Durwood.

38.

She reaches up and shakes his hand.

MARY

Mary Magdalene Horowitz.

TRUCK DRIVER/NORM

Good to meet you... I think.
Still holding the license, she digs in her Kroger bag, pulls
out a large black magic marker. She pushes up her sleeve and
writes Norm's license number in huge print down her arm.

MARY

Norm, if you're going to rape and
murder me, you'll have to cut me up
into a million chunks and scatter
me all over four states, otherwise

this appendage -
She holds her arm up, shows him.

MARY

Will lead homicide detectives right
to you.
She smiles at him warmly, puts the marker back in her bag.

MARY

And you already told me you don't
have a light to burn the flesh off.
Norm can't believe this. Before he can say a word, Mary
moves around to the passenger side, hops up into the truck.
She notices some snacks on the dash.

MARY

Moon Pies! Want to go halvesies?
At a loss, Norm motions for Mary to help herself. As she
unwraps a Pie, he reluctantly starts up the truck.

EXT. MEDIEVAL TIMES - DALLAS - NIGHT

Steve reloads his battery camera at the rental van. Angus
looks over paperwork.

ANGUS

Rebecca wants you to come for
dinner when we're back home. Her
cousin from Florida -

39.

STEVE

Forget it.

ANGUS

What?

STEVE

It's a set up.

ANGUS

She's hot.

STEVE

I don't care. Never again. My mom
set me up with this chick -

ANGUS

You let you mother set you up?
What the hell is wrong with you?
There's a commotion in the distance. Every photographer on
the grounds focuses on the castle. Reporters jump into
position.
Hartman touches up his make-up, roots through his bag. He
yells out to Steve, Angus and Josh.

HARTMAN

Which one of you bastards hid my
bronzing shimmer?
The police surrounding the castle take aim.
Dead silence as the Medieval Times drawbridge lowers.
A KNIGHT walks out, arms raised as high as his squeaking
armor will allow, which is not very high, but high enough to
get the point across -- Surrender.

INT. NORM'S TRUCK -- NIGHT

Norm drives as Mary drones on while flipping through a truck
repair manual.

MARY

And my other rule about crossword

puzzles is this. No pencils.
Doing a crossword with a pencil is
like screaming with your lips duct
taped together. It's weak.

(MORE)

40.

MARY (cont'd)
If you're going to do a crossword,
you should do it fearlessly, with
abandon, and with a pen. I prefer
a medium tip, felt, blue -

NORM

Quiet time might be good right
about now.

MARY

Oh.
She thinks about it, whispers.

MARY

Do you mean quiet as in softly
hushed like this? Or do you mean
quiet, as in silent?
He nods. Mary squeezes her lips together, holds them. It
lasts for about a second.

MARY

Norm?

NORM

What?

MARY

Thanks for not raping me.

NORM

My pleasure.

EXT. ROUTE 20 - DAY

As the sun comes up, Norm's truck drives into Dallas.

EXT. MEDIEVAL TIMES - DALLAS - DAY

Norm's truck drives away, leaving Mary standing on the side
of Interstate 35. She looks across the road to the Medieval
Times -- it's completely deserted.

MARY

Eight letter word for "screwed".
Mary crosses to the Medieval Times parking lot, steps over
the police line blowing in the wind.

MARY

F-A-S-T-E-N-E-D. Fastened.

41.

She looks around. There's nobody for miles.

MARY (V.O.)

That's what's great about
crosswords, and life. Every once
in a while, you get a surprise.
She heads back to the interstate, starts walking.

INT. BUS STATION - DAY

Mary walks past TV in the bus station tuned to Fox News. On every screen - images of an upset WOMAN dodging press to get through the doors of Children's Hospital, Oklahoma City. The screen caption: "The Fight for Baby Peggy".

EXT. CITY STREET -- DAY

Mary talks on a pay phone.

MARY

All roads lead to Oklahoma, Papa.

INT. HOROWITZ HOUSE - DAY

Mary's parents share the phone.

MR. HOROWITZ

Last time I checked, freeway 20 still heads right back here.

EXT. CITY STREET - DAY

Mary continues on the phone.

MARY

My road, dad. My road. You don't commit to a relationship and then give up because you'd rather be at home curled up in front of the fireplace with a thesaurus. This is what people are supposed to do - go out on a limb for love. My limb just happens to be in Oklahoma. It's only 850 miles away from home. No big deal.

(MORE)

42.

MARY (cont'd)

Just think of this like the time I went to Girl Scout camp, except for the part where I got kicked out. This time, no unsupervised butane experiment is going to ruin the adventure, I swear.

INT. HOROWITZ HOUSE - DAY

Mrs. Horowitz hangs up the phone. Mr. Horowitz walks to the TV, turns it on, flips stations.

MR. HOROWITZ

Oklahoma. Images of the Oklahoma hospital vigil are everywhere. Captions like "Breaking News: Baby Peggy" flash across the screen.

EXT. OKLAHOMA CITY CHILDREN'S HOSPITAL - DAY

Dozens of local and national news vans line the streets surrounding the hospital. A long line of news crews, views of the hospital's admitting entrance behind them. At one end of the line, a male KOCO (Oklahoma) REPORTER talks to camera.

KOCO REPORTER

Eleven months ago, the child we've come to know as Baby Peggy was born with an extremely rare birth defect, a third leg. Shortly after the birth, her parents Misty and

Bill Dunlevy separated. Now with joint custody, one parent wants the baby to keep the third leg, the other wants it gone... A few feet away, a female FOX NEWS REPORTER is on camera.

FOX NEWS REPORTER

After months of legal wrangling, a judge has ordered in favor of the mother. Amputation surgery is scheduled for Wednesday but the father, Bill Dunlevy, isn't about to give up. As his lawyers work to secure an injunction, the devoted father rallies public support for the extra limb.

43.

At the end of the long line of news crews, Steve has the camera on Hartman.

HARTMAN

(READING)

"God wouldn't have given my child the third leg if he didn't want her to keep it." But for now, the fate of that precious child's third leg is the hands of a judge... This is Hartman Hughes reporting, live from Oklahoma City. Steve signals they've cut, lowers his camera. Hartman calls out to Angus.

HARTMAN

What if next time I say Baby Peggy is like the wishbone of her parents' dispute? Hartman acts out a wishbone pull. Steve's disgusted.

STEVE

Yeah, go ahead and suggest that. Corbitt will love it. Steve turns and looks toward the edge of the fenced off hospital grounds. Dozens of PROTESTORS are camped out - a sorry assortment of oddballs standing at the fence, waving their signs: "SPARE THE LEG", and "HONOR THE FATHER". Many of them carry drawings of a three legged baby wearing a halo. Steve braces himself and heads for the crowd. Half way across, he spots a loner walking from the parking lot. He's 35, chubby, his shirt buttoned one button off so it hangs lower on the left. This is HOWARD. In one hand: a pro-leg sign. In his other hand: a carton of chocolate milk. Howard stops to lick up the chocolate milk spilling all over his arm. Steve catches up with him.

STEVE

Mind if I ask you a few questions on camera?

HOWARD

Me?

STEVE

How do you feel about what's going on here?

44.

Steve shoulders his camera, focuses in on Howard's sign.

It's an impressively detailed drawing of a judge yanking a baby's third leg off.

HOWARD

I haven't made up my mind yet.
Both parties have valid arguments.

EXT. 13TH STREET - DAY

HOSPITAL STAFF, PROTESTORS and the curious PUBLIC approach the hospital grounds.
A taxi inches through the crowd. It barely stops when Mary leaps out like she's late for a Yanni concert.

EXT. OKLAHOMA CITY CHILDREN'S HOSPITAL - DAY

Mary steps onto the hospital grounds and looks all around her - NEWS CREWS circulate, PATIENTS and staff walk in and out of the hospital, protestors line the fence. Somewhere in the middle, she finds what she's hunting for -- Steve.
Mary's face lights up and she starts running toward him - in her mind, no doubt in slow motion, with clouds parting to light her way.
Steve's attention is drawn away from the interview with Howard. He spots Mary running toward him, arms outstretched.

STEVE

Please God, no.
He looks for a place to hide but she's running ridiculously fast. It's too late. She's only a few feet away.

MARY

Steve!
She jumps into his arms but he's only got one arm free and isn't about to use it to catch her. She slides down his leg to the ground but quickly picks herself up.

MARY

I'm here! Surprised?

STEVE

Surprised?

45.

MARY

Astounded, flabbergasted,
bushwacked -
He pulls Mary off to the side, away from everybody.

STEVE

What are you doing?

MARY

Talking to you. And noticing how the Oklahoma climate agrees with your complexion.

STEVE

Tell me you didn't come all the way here just to see me.

MARY

Of course not... I went to Dallas looking for you first. And you know why?
Steve grabs his head. This is not happening.

MARY

Because you're inimitable and I'm intransigent.

STEVE

No, we're not. I don't know what that means but trust me. We're so not.

MARY

It means you're awesome and I'm unstoppable.

STEVE

Great. Listen, Mary, you seem like a nice girl, and the ten minutes we spent together were --

MARY

Mind blowing.
At a complete loss, he just goes along.

STEVE

Sure, but I'm working here.
Working.

46.

Mary points to the partially hidden side door of the hospital. A MAN with his face covered, in a nurse's uniform and dress shoes, sneaks out the door unnoticed.

MARY

I know. I'm just here to support you, show you I care, and also ask why you aren't following that guy pretending to be a nurse but obviously not wearing sterilizable, non-slip footwear.
Steve looks toward the hospital, spots the Man.

MARY

If I was Baby Peggy's dad, that's how I'd avoid the press too.
Steve takes off running. Mary yells out to him.

MARY

I'll be right here in case you want to make out later on!
Steve looks back, a bunch of people stare. Mary waves to him then watches until he's out of sight.
A SECURITY GUARD approaches her.

SECURITY GUARD

Miss, if you want to be here, you're going to have to stay behind the fence.
Mary turns to see what he's pointing at - the growing crowd of protestors off in the distance. They wave their signs around, cry, sing and sway together, their painful song barely audible from afar.

PROTESTORS

Near, far, wherever you are, we believe that the leg should stay on...
Mary watches, paralyzed with awe, like seeing herself in the mirror for the first time ever.
At last, she has found her people.

47.

EXT. OKLAHOMA PROTESTORS CAMP - DAY

An overweight 30ish woman ELIZABETH (who shouldn't be wearing

those low rise pants and cropped tee) lights a bunch of candles in the grass behind the protestor fence. She reaches the last candle in line just as Mary walks up to join the group. Elizabeth looks up at Mary, smiles.

ELIZABETH

I like your boots.

MARY

Thanks. I found them in an alley. Elizabeth looks at the boots again, impressed. She stands up.

ELIZABETH

Are you pro-leg or anti-leg?

MARY

Neither really.

ELIZABETH

This is the pro-leg group over here. We're supporting Baby Peggy's dad in his fight to save the baby's third leg. She points to the end of the fenced off area where only a few protestors hold anti-leg signs: "NORMAL LIFE FOR BABY PEGGY",

"3 LEGS ARE NOT BETTER THAN 2".

ELIZABETH

Those are the anti-leggers. They're all for the amputation.

MARY

I'm just here because my boyfriend is working the story. He's with CNN, the world's news leader, the most trusted name in news, the place where more -

ELIZABETH

The pro-leggers have better snacks.

MARY

I'm definitely pro-leg.

48.

Elizabeth smiles, hands Mary a candle.

INT. HOROWITZ HOUSE -- NIGHT

Mr. and Mrs. Horowitz watch TV and read at the same time. The TV is on mute --- CNN's Baby Peggy coverage. In the corner of the screen, "amputation countdown - 35 hours". Shots of the protestors' candlelight vigil appear on the screen.

Mrs. Horowitz spots Mary in the crowd, standing next to Elizabeth. She sings and waves her candle around, all the while straining to look for Steve.

MRS. HOROWITZ

There she is! Abe, look! There she is right there. Mr. Horowitz glances up from his book.

MR. HOROWITZ

She's going to set her hair on fire with that candle.

MRS. HOROWITZ

Look, she's made friends. Mrs. Horowitz tries not to cry.

EXT. OKLAHOMA MEDIA CAMP - NIGHT

At the back doors of the rental van, Steve and Angus work on laptops. Steve confides in Angus, trying not to wake up Hartman sleeping on the back seat.

STEVE

She's on me what, thirty seconds after meeting me, and the chick will not shut up the whole time. I had to fake a work call, gave her the -

ANGUS

(imitating Steve)
Wherever news goes...

49.

STEVE

I think I'm in the clear, then she does this crossword - she works for the Citizen - she does this crossword all about me, and as if that's not crazy enough, she shows up here.

ANGUS

Here?

STEVE

Over by the fence. Red boots.
Can't miss her.

ANGUS

Is she hot?

STEVE

Jesus, Angus. When a psychotic chick's swinging a machete at your throat, who cares if she's hot?

ANGUS

I've been married to the same woman for seventeen years. I care.

STEVE

Crazy, man. The chick is cra-zy.
Hartman sits up, totally awake and never happier. He points at Steve.

HARTMAN

Priceless! This is priceless!
Steve cringes.

STEVE

Hughes, don't. Don't even.

EXT. OKLAHOMA PROTESTORS CAMP - NIGHT

A short, 60ish PROTESTOR and his PROTESTOR WIFE talk to an Oklahoma Journal Record NEWSPAPER REPORTER at the fence.

PROTESTOR WIFE

All we're saying is, wait until Baby Peggy can talk and ask her what she wants to do with the spare.

50.

Mary listens in while she dispenses a hot chocolate from another protestor's backpack thermos. She finishes pouring, taps the guy on the shoulder.

MARY

Thanks, Bruno.

He walks away. Mary takes a sip of the hot chocolate, burns her mouth.

MARY

Crap.

She grabs her tongue with her fingers. Hartman appears right in front of her.

HARTMAN

M'lady.

She's a bit stunned and star struck. He offers his hand.

HARTMAN

Hartman Hughes.

Mary lets go of her tongue, uses her saliva covered hand to shake his.

MARY

Mary.

HARTMAN

Mary'. Mary, Mary, Mary.

He takes his hand back, discretely wipes it on his pants.

HARTMAN

Steve told me you were beautiful.

He was going on and on and on and on about it. I had to come see for myself. Great boots.

MARY

Thank y-

He puts an arm around her, pulls her away from the crowd.

HARTMAN

Listen, Mary, I've been working

with Steve for about a year now.

The guy is like a brother to me.

A YOUNG PROTESTOR recognizes Hartman.

51.

YOUNG PROTESTOR

Hartman Hughes'.

Without missing a step, Hartman grabs a pen from his pocket and autographs the guy's sign whether he wants it or not, then continues on with Mary.

HARTMAN

Girls follow us around everywhere

we go. Who do you think they're

after?

Hartman reflects on it, smiles.

HARTMAN

Me, of course me, but every once in

a while some of them try to land

Steve. It's true. Sure he'll go

for a few skanks here and there but

it's all just a sad attempt to hide

his fear. All he wants is to love

but he's afraid of opening up,

afraid of putting himself out

there, afraid of somebody like you,

Mary - yes you - afraid of you

breaking his heart. Can you blame
him?
She's a bit stunned and confused by all of this.

MARY

No?

HARTMAN

No! Promise me this. Promise
you'll stick around long enough to
help him get over that fear. He
tells you to go away, don't. He
says he thinks you're crazy?
You're not. He's crazy, Mary.
Crazy not to let down his walls and
tell you how he really feels. Can
I count on you to hang in there no
matter what?

MARY

Of course. I don't want to
interfere in his work but I just
need to be here for him and -
He grabs her, hugs her in so her words are all muffled - and
yet she keeps talking.

52.

HARTMAN

Good girl.
The SECURITY GUARD walks past, gestures that they should be
behind the fence. Hartman holds up his press pass to get rid
of the Guard, then lets go of Mary. He points her toward the
protestors, starts backing away.

HARTMAN

I'll tell Steve to come find you
when we wrap for the day. What
side are you on?

MARY

Pro-leg.
She shows him her button featuring a cartoon of a very happy
three legged baby. Hartman laughs.

HARTMAN

You might want to jump camps. No
way they're going let that baby
keep the third leg and live like a
freak. Trust me.
He waves and turns around, starts heading for the press camp.
Mary calls out to him.

MARY

She'd just be like the tree frogs.
Hartman turns around. What?

MARY

A trematode parasite causes
polymely (that means extra limbs)
in tree frogs. It happens all the
time. In some ponds there's like a
quarter of the tree frogs with
extra legs. Totally natural.
Hartman looks at her like she's a nutcase.

EXT. OKLAHOMA MEDIA CAMP - NIGHT

Angus is on his phone as Steve rushes to set up his
equipment. Hartman arrives back at the van.

HARTMAN

What's going on?

Josh rushes to get the mic on Hartman.

53.

JOSH

The parents of the kid got back together. Surgery's cancelled.

HARTMAN

No amputation?

STEVE

Tell me you weren't talking to Mary.

HARTMAN

Who?

STEVE

Go to hell, Hughes.
scans it
Angus hands Hartman the press release. Hartman quickly.

HARTMAN

It's over? The kid keeps the leg.

ANGUS

For now.
Hartman checks his teeth in a hand mirror.

HARTMAN

'Til she gets it caught in a car door.

EXT. OKLAHOMA PROTESTORS CAMP - NIGHT

News spreads around the pro-leg protestors camp. They all start hollering with joy.
The disappointed anti-leg protestors ditch their signs and storm off.

INT. HOROWITZ HOUSE - NIGHT

Mr. Horowitz is asleep in front of the TV. He wakes up as the amputation countdown clock on the news stops.

EXT. OKLAHOMA CITY CHILDREN'S HOSPITAL - NIGHT

The news crews line the hospital entrance once again.

54.

KOCO REPORTER

With mere hours to spare, the Dunlevys reconciled, agreeing to halt surgery until Baby Peggy is old enough to decide for herself.
Further down the row of reporters:

FOX NEWS REPORTER

And while dozens of children fight for their lives behind these walls, Baby Peggy won't be one of them.
With surgery cancelled, it's time for the Dunlevys to be a family once again.
Past a few more news crews, at the end the line, Steve has the camera on Hartman.

HARTMAN

And like the noble tree frog whose extra leg is nothing if not natural, so Baby Peggy begins the rest of her three legged life... This is Hartman Hughes reporting live from Oklahoma City. Hartman pulls out his ear piece. Angus, Josh and Steve all look at him, a bit surprised.

STEVE

Tree frog? Where do you get this shit?
Hartman taps the side of his head -- it's all up here.

HARTMAN

A little thing called astutitude, my friends.
Steve and Angus look at each other -- is that even a word?

EXT. OKLAHOMA PROTESTORS CAMP - NIGHT

Mary celebrates with the other protestors. The Protestor and his Protestor Wife cry tears of joy. Mary pulls a tissue out of her bag, hands it over. The husband takes it, turns away and wipes his eyes.

55.

MARY

There you go, George. Just a little nasolacrimal duct cleaning. Nothing to be ashamed of. Elizabeth runs up to Mary, hugs her.

ELIZABETH

You see? When you sing loud enough and when your signs are big enough, people listen!
Mary spots some of the news vans pulling away.

MARY

Steve!

ELIZABETH

Go, go on. I'll watch your stuff.
Mary drops her bags, runs toward the media camp.

EXT. OKLAHOMA MEDIA CAMP - NIGHT

Josh pulls the back doors of the van shut.

INT. RENTAL VAN - NIGHT

Angus at the wheel, Hartman in the passenger seat. In the back, Steve nervously looks out the windows. Josh gets in next to him.
Angus starts driving slowly across the grass behind other news vans. Steve finally relaxes.

EXT. RENTAL VAN - NIGHT

As the van drives, Mary runs to catch up.

MARY

Steve! STEVE!

INT. RENTAL VAN - NIGHT

Hartman spots Mary in the rear view mirror.

HARTMAN

Angus, hold up.

56.

Steve sees what Hartman's looking at.

STEVE

No, go. Fast.
Hartman rolls down his window.

STEVE

Don't.
Hartman sticks his head out the window.

STEVE

Hughes, I swear I'll kill you.
Hartman waves to Mary to catch up. Angus sees her in the mirror as he drives.

ANGUS

Is that her? She's hot.

STEVE

Angus, come on man, get me out of here.

ANGUS

She's really hot.

STEVE

Who cares? Jesus, you guys -
Angus hits the brakes. Steve hides behind the seat just as Mary catches up with the van.

HARTMAN

Hi beautiful.
Mary tries to get a look at Steve but can only see part of his back hunched over behind the seat.

MARY

Steve? Are you okay? Is he okay?
Angus leans over to her window.

ANGUS

I don't think we've met. Angus.
Mary shakes Angus' hand. He can't take his eyes off her.

HARTMAN

Steve's not feeling well.

57.

MARY

Oh no.

HARTMAN

I'm sure he'll be fine by the time we get to New Mexico.

ANGUS

Your eyes are striking.
Steve punches him through the seat. Mary's oblivious.

MARY

Thank you.

HARTMAN

Steve really wants you to follow us. It would mean a lot to him.

STAYS

Steve cringes, goes to speak up but stops himself and hidden.

HARTMAN

He was going to go ask you himself but look at the poor bastard. So sick he can't even sit up straight.

MARY

What if it's a viral zoonotic disease? He should see a doctor.

HARTMAN

Exactly what I told him, but the only person he wants touching his infected flesh is you.
Mary looks at Steve, worried.

MARY

But wait, what if -
up.
Hartman grabs her face, squishes her lips to shut her

HARTMAN

Hey now, we need you to be strong for him. Leachinan trial, Santa Fe, can you remember that?
Mary nods, unable to speak.

HARTMAN

We'll meet you there, God willing.

58.

He lets go of her face.

MARY

Will you take care of him?

HARTMAN

Like he's my own.
She backs away from the window. Angus waves to her and starts driving.

ANGUS

Nothing wrong with that one.

JOSH

Except for those boots.

STEVE

You're an asshole, Hughes.
Hartman laughs.

EXT. RENTAL VAN - NIGHT

Mary watches the van drive away.

EXT. OKLAHOMA PROTESTORS CAMP - NIGHT

Only a few protestors remain. Abandoned signs and garbage cover the grass. Elizabeth gets autographs from other protestors like it's the last day of high school.
Mary runs up, grabs her bags.

MARY

Elizabeth! I have to meet Steve at his next job, in New Mexico. He's sick, not as in rad, although he is that too, but more like unwell, infirm, perhaps barfy. Hopefully nothing serious but you never can be too sure and besides, healthy or

not, he needs me.

ELIZABETH

Sign my book before you go?
Elizabeth hands her the ratty hand decorated book and a pen.

59.

MARY

The trip's not too long, right
through all kinds of interesting
sites like, for example, El
Santuario de Chimayo: The Lourdes
of America. Know what that is? A
sacred sand pit near a burrito
stand. What could be better than
that?
Mary looks away from Elizabeth, fidgets a bit.

MARY

Want to go? Unless you're busy, I
mean. You probably have something
better to do.
Elizabeth thinks about it.

ELIZABETH

Not really.
Mary is stunned. She takes a minute to realize it's real,
gets excited. From behind her:

HOWARD (O.S.)

I'll go too.
Mary turns around and spots Howard.

ELIZABETH

Mary, have you met Howard?
Mary shakes her head. Howard offers his hand. It's got
dried chocolate milk all over it. She takes it.

ELIZABETH

Mary, Howard. Howard, Mary. Mary,
Howard's got a car, you know. He
can drive us.
Mary looks at him, thinks about it.

MARY

What kind of car do you have?

HOWARD

Plymouth Colt.

MARY

What year?

60.

HOWARD

Eighty-nine.
Mary quickly scans her memory.

MARY

Replace the recalled seat belts?

HOWARD

Yes.
Mary thinks about it, smiles.

MARY

Let's grab souvenirs!

Elizabeth and Howard each pick up a Baby Peggy sign off the ground. Mary grabs as many as she can hold -- way, way too many. A bunch of them slide off but she perseveres.

MARY (V.O.)

Here's something you never see in crosswords, two letter words, and thank goodness for that. The word "go": not fun. The word "vamoose": super fun. You see? crosswords are just like life in that way - they're only boring if you have no sense of adventure.

INT. HOWARD'S CAR - NIGHT

Howard starts the car. In the passenger seat, Elizabeth has a bunch of the protest signs crammed in at her feet. Mary gets settled in the back seat, spots a copy of Scientific American magazine, then finds an apple stuck behind the seat belt. She yanks the apple out, looks at it. Howard looks at her in the rear view mirror.

HOWARD

You can have that. I have more.

MARY

Thanks.
Mary puts the apple in her Kroger bag.

MARY

Howard, if you get sleepy and want to trade off driving for a while, just wake me up and I'll take over.

(MORE)

61.

MARY (cont'd)

I'm a night owl, yes, but I'm also a day owl too, a burrowing owl, technically. They stay awake all day too. I'm pretty much alert 24/7, always have been. No caffeine. Just sugar and my natural tendency to, you know, never fall asleep.
Mary leans back, closes her eyes, and she's out.

EXT. I-40 - NIGHT

Howard's car merges onto the highway, westbound toward New Mexico and into the night. Mary sleep talks in the back.

MARY

Persimmon. AKA, the mabolo, the date-plum, the velvet apple.
Genus: Diospyros.

EXT. SANTA FE FEDERAL COURT HOUSE - DAY

A media extravaganza - local, national and this time, international news teams.
A REPORTER for Inside Edition talks on camera.

INSIDE EDITION REPORTER

This tragedy began eight months ago in what was once paradise - the Elysium Sanctuary outside of Taos, New Mexico. For years, celebrities considered the five star meditation resort the only true place for spiritual purification, and with

good reason. Nestled in the heart of reclaimed Pueblo Indian lands, the Elysium Sanctuary promised one thing - enlightenment.
A COURT TV REPORTER is on camera a few feet away.

COURT TV REPORTER

But the Elysium Sanctuary would never be the same after tragedy struck last winter. Twenty-six year old resort masseuse Juan Carlos Velasquez found stabbed to death in the meditation villa of beloved star of stage and screen, Cloris Leachman.

62.

A bit further down the line of reporters, an EXTRA! REPORTER is on camera.

EXTRA! REPORTER

Publicists for the eighty year old Leachman insist her relationship with the deceased Velasquez was no different than with the dozens of other resort personnel attending to Ms. Leachman during her solitude retreat.
At the end of the row, Hartman reports.

HARTMAN

But the octogenarian Leachman may not have been as innocent as her representatives claimed, at least according to the evidence found at the murder scene.
Hartman reads from his notes.

HARTMAN

Whips, hot wax, bamboo skewers, a spanking bench, and perhaps most damaging, a henna tattoo across Ms. Leachman's chest that read "Mrs. Juan Carlos Velasquez".

EXT. SANTA FE FEDERAL COURT HOUSE - DAY

Elizabeth, Mary and Howard step onto the curb and survey the crowd.

On one side, an odd assortment of fans with signs like "FREE CLORIS", "JAIL REAL CRIMINALS, NOT OLD LADIES" and "OSCAR WINNERS DON'T KILL", with photos of Cloris Leachman through the years.

On the other side of the crowd, a smaller group of MEXICAN MOURNERS with signs "JUSTICE FOR JUAN", "GUILTY", and "LET

THE BITCH FRY".

HOWARD

Guilty or not?
They all think about it. A greasy haired Shaman CLYDE steps up behind them.

63.

CLYDE

Everybody deserves the benefit of the doubt.
He looks at Mary, smiles.

CLYDE

Everybody.
As he joins the Leachman fans, Mary thinks about it.

MARY

Be has a point.

ELIZABETH

Yay! I love Cloris Leachman.

HOWARD

Who doesn't?

MEXICAN MOURNERS

¡Muerte! ¡Muerte! ¡Muerte!

MARY

I have to go find Steve. How do I look?
Unwashed hair, bed head, and there's a chunk of a Twinkie caked onto Mary's ear. Elizabeth picks the Twinkie off, smooths down Mary's hair.

ELIZABETH

Perfect.

MARY

I'll be back. Save me a sign! And if Cloris comes out, tell her I loved her in "My Little Pony: The Movie".
Mary runs off as Howard and Elizabeth join the crowd of fans.

EXT. SANTA FE FEDERAL COURT HOUSE - MEDIA CAMP - DAY

Mary walks among the news vans. At the entrance to a nearby tent, Hartman spots her, waves her over.

HARTMAN

Hi gorgeous. What'd you do to your hair?

64.

MARY

Slept on it in the car. Where's Steve? Is he okay?

HARTMAN

Never better. Come in and wait.
He'll be back soon.

INT. MEDIA TENT - DAY

A briefing area is set up - folding chairs, table, podium. A bunch of male journalists sit around the table playing poker - Vince (CNN), DOUG (CNN), the COURT TV REPORTER, a BBC NEWS PHOTOGRAPHER, a FRENCH PHOTOGRAPHER, A SPANISH JOURNALIST and Angus.
Hartman escorts Mary in. The guys perk up a bit.

HARTMAN

You all know Mary? Steve's girlfriend?
Mary shakes hands around the table, greets them all in their native tongues.

MARY

Hello... Bonjour... Hola...
Jolly afternoon...
She gets to Angus. He kisses her hand.

ANGUS

My dear, sit.
He shoves the BBC guy out of the way to make room for Mary next to him. Vince shuffles the cards.

VINCE

Mary, you in?

MARY

Poker? Technically I'm familiar
but I've never actually played.
With people, I mean.

SPANISH JOURNALIST

She's in.
Doug throws in some cash as Vince starts to deal.

65.

EXT. SANTA FE FEDERAL COURT HOUSE - SPECTATORS AREA - DAY

Howard wanders through the crowd wearing an "I V Cloris" t-shirt over his own. He passes a VENDOR selling "Innocence Beads", "Acquittal Incense" and "autographed" Cloris Leachman photos.
The crowd continues to grow. A Candles are lit, healing rituals performed, donuts passed around.

INT. MEDIA TENT - DAY

Mary holds her cards close to her.

MARY

"There are few things that are so unpardonably neglected in our country as poker." Guess who said that one.
She looks around the table. The guys, except Angus, are starting to lose their patience.

MARY

Mark Twain. And you know what else-

BBC NEWS PHOTOGRAPHER

Darling, you in or not?

MARY

Sorry.
Mary looks at her cards, thinks about it for way too long, then grabs a handful of coins from her Kroger bag, slaps them on the table.

MARY

Send it, ladies!
Steve steps into the tent, spots Mary, turns to run back out.

HARTMAN

Don't go, Steve! Look who's here.
Mary jumps up - just about knocks the table over, then sustains a number of injuries trying to leap over chairs. At last she makes it to Steve, hugs him.

MARY

Thank God you're okay!

66.

He looks over her shoulder and mouths "you're dead" to Hartman.

TO

He holds her back at arm's length, looks at her, goes speak then stops himself, pulls her outside the tent.

EXT. MEDIA TENT - DAY

Steve tries to stay calm talking to Mary.

STEVE

You have to stop stalking me.

MARY

I'm not. It's more like picking travel destinations based on where you happen to be working.

STEVE

Stalking.

MARY

Hartman told me you wanted me here. Now that I am, what better opportunity for us to get to know each other better.

STEVE

This is crazy.

MARY

Hartman said you'd say that.

STEVE

Go home, Mary.

MARY

And he said you'd say that too. It's just your fear talking. Steve just about loses it.

STEVE

He's not my friend, he's not your friend. He's just an asshole who thinks it's fun to string you along and make my life hell. He yells toward the tent.

STEVE

Hughes! Get out here!

67.

Mary looks right at him.

MARY

You know how sometimes you see a pinguid (that means fat and greasy) guy with an attractive girl and you think how the heck did he pull that off? People won't think that when they look at us. We're perfectly matched. She can hardly contain her excitement.

STEVE

HUGHES!

Hartman peeks out of the tent.

HARTMAN

For the hundredth time, Steve, no, I am not interested in a threesome with you and your new girlfriend. Steve points to Mary.

STEVE

Tell her the truth. About all the
crap you told her.

HARTMAN

Okay. Fine.
Hartman goes to Mary, grabs her hand.

HARTMAN

Everything I said about Steve,
about his feelings for you, his
hopes, his dreams, his fears, his
unexplainable odor, forget about
it. Forget everything I said.
None of it was true.
Mary's stunned, devastated. She looks like she's going to
cry. Hartman and Steve look at each other - what now?
Hartman shoves him forward. Steve reluctantly puts a
comforting hand on her shoulder.

HARTMAN

Because nothing I said comes close
to the enormity of Steve's real
feelings for you!

68.

Mary perks up. Steve yanks his hand off her shoulder like
it's on fire.

HARTMAN

It's a love that defies words!
Steve jumps him. Hartman fights back. Mary's horrified.

MARY

Stop it, you guys! Stop! "Victory
attained by violence is tantamount
to a defeat, for it is momentary."
You know who said that? Gandhi.
And me. Just now.
The fight continues. Mary half covers her eyes.

INT. MEDIA TENT - DAY

At the poker table, the guys hear scuffling outside.

BBC NEWS PHOTOGRAPHER

Fight!
They all jump up and run out of the tent.

EXT. MEDIA TENT - DAY

Steve gets a few jabs to Hartman as the rest of the guys
calmly watch.

VINCE

Nice one.

BBC NEWS PHOTOGRAPHER

Somebody's going to be crying in a
minute.
Angus hugs Mary to "console" her. Hartman gets Steve in a
headlock. Mary can't even watch.

SPANISH JOURNALIST

I'm going to go with Hughes on this
one.

VINCE

Come on, the guy wears makeup.
The guys all start pulling out cash to place bets. Mary
spots the cash changing hands.

69.

MARY

No! This isn't about money! It's about courage, love, honor and all things virtuous and pure. Steve, kick him in the leberknoedel! Hartman looks up at her, hurt. The distraction costs him. Steve knees him then follows with a jab to his face.

JOURNALISTS

Ohhhh!
Hartman drops to his knees, tries to pull himself together.

STEVE

Tell her!

HARTMAN

Okay, alright.
Hartman wipes his lip, looks up at Mary.

HARTMAN

Mary, millions of people believe what I tell them every night. Why shouldn't you?
Steve dives at him. Hartman swings and gets him right in the nose. One of their cell phones ring, then another, then all the guys' phones go off.

ANGUS

Verdict's in.
They all rush off to the court house, leaving a stunned Mary standing alone.

MARY

He fought for me.
Happiest moment of her life.

EXT. SANTA FE FEDERAL COURT HOUSE - DAY

The crowd cheers as CLORIS LEACHMAN is whisked out of the court house and into a police car. She waves to her fans as she goes.
The Court TV Reporter is on camera.

70.

COURT TV REPORTER

The end to a difficult and often emotional trial, the verdict finally in, Cloris Leachman found not guilty of the murder of her twenty-six year old lover Juan Carlos Velasquez.
Down the row of journalists, the BBC CREW.

BBC JOURNALIST

After a devastating eight months, Leachman at last vindicated despite overwhelming evidence against her.
Six more cameras down, the French Reporter.

FRENCH REPORTER

(SUBTITLED)

Eyewitness testimony, fingerprints on every inch of the body, the murder weapon still warm in her Chanel handbag -
And finally at the end of the line, Hartman - his hair a

mess, his lip cut, his mood sour.
A few feet away filming, Steve's nose bleeds down his chin
and shirt.

HARTMAN

And as she left the court room
today a free woman, the cheers of
her devoted fans carrying her
forward -

MARY (O.S.)

OH MY GOD, STEVE, YOU'RE BLEEDING!
The camera is knocked out of position as Mary rushes Steve.
Angus steps in and pulls her away. A COP grabs her.
Mary looks back to Steve as she's dragged back to the fan
area.

MARY

Please! Somebody help him! Apply
a vasoconstrictor, a nasal tampon,
anything! At the absolute least,
direct pressure and a clean tissue!
Steve puts the camera back in place. Hartman recovers fast.

71.

HARTMAN

As you can see, Cloris Leachman's
fans have become surprisingly
violent despite her victory here
today. Add this to the list of the
most dangerous locations for
journalists. Iraq, Somalia,
Lebanon, Sri Lanka... and just
about any place Cloris Leachman
fans gather.
Hartman wipes blood from his lip.

HARTMAN

Hartman Hughes putting his life at
risk to report live from Santa Fe,
New Mexico.
They cut. Hartman grabs a hand mirror, points to his face,
yells out to Steve.

HARTMAN

This is my gift, understand, my
instrument. Makes no difference if
you're walking around looking like
Quasimodo.
Ignoring Hartman, Steve walks over to Angus.

STEVE

How long do you figure until -
Steve's phone rings. He cringes, answers it.

INT. CNN ATLANTA - DAY

A furious Corbitt holds the phone and replays the live shot
of Hartman at the court house.

MARY (O.S., ON TV)

OH MY GOD, STEVE, YOU'RE

BLEEDING!... OH MY GOD, STEVE,

YOU'RE BLEEDING!... OH MY GOD,

STEVE, YOU'RE BLEEDING!

CORBITT

Who the hell was that?

EXT. SANTA FE FEDERAL COURT HOUSE - DAY

Steve hesitates on the phone.

72.

STEVE

This girl. She's been following me... She's not my girlfriend... He listens, clenches his teeth, hands the phone to Angus. As Angus listens, Steve grabs his equipment, waits in dread. Angus hangs up the phone, hands it back to Steve.

STEVE

I'm done?

ANGUS

Consider yourself temporarily saved by the storm. It's worse than they thought. We've got to move. Steve grabs his equipment. They start walking.

ANGUS

He'll probably fire you after.

STEVE

Any luck, the storm will kill me first.

EXT. SANTA FE FEDERAL COURT HOUSE - FAN CAMP - DAY

Elizabeth runs around hugging other fans as Mary stands at the fence watching the press wrap up, worried. Clyde the Shaman joins her at the fence, looks right at her, raises a finger to his lips.

CLYDE

Shhhh.

MARY

What? I didn't -

CLYDE

Shhhh.
He puts his hands on the sides of her head. Mary's confused and a bit freaked out.

CLYDE

In here. So loud. Always thinking, thinking, thinking. Mary goes to speak, stops herself. Clyde keeps his hands still on her head, looks into her eyes.

73.

CLYDE

You already found what you're looking for. Mary's eyes soften and she's suddenly calm. A moment of peace. Suddenly, Mary spots Hartman, Steve and Angus rush past. She breaks away from Clyde, rushes along the fence to catch up.

MARY

Wait! Steve!
Hartman spots her.

HARTMAN

Sorry, darling, we're on to the next story.

MARY

No, wait! Attendee!
She runs to the end of the fence, jumps it, runs after them.

EXT. SANTA FE MEDIA CAMP - DAY

Mary runs to catch up with Steve, Angus and Hartman as they rush to the trucks.

MARY

STEVE! STEVE!

Angus and Hartman load up the truck as Steve turns back to Mary, seething.

STEVE

Considering you probably just cost me my job, maybe you don't want to talk to me right now.

MARY

But I do! If you're in trouble because of me I can fix it, I can explain to your boss. He or she probably just doesn't understand our relationship.

STEVE

We don't have a relationship.

74.

MARY

Sure we do, it's just in the pupa stage right now.

STEVE

Mary, go home!
She looks at him, hurt.

STEVE

Go home.
He jumps in the CNN truck as Angus starts it up. Mary looks around, helpless.

EXT. SANTA FE STREET - DAY

Mary runs to the street behind the CNN truck, stops on the sidewalk. Behind her, a run down rep theater -- "All Above Eve" on the marquee.
As she watches the truck drive away, her panic suddenly turns to resolve.

MARY

Six letter word for "over my lifeless, rigormortic and maggot infested, i.e. dead, body am I giving up now"... D-O-G-G-motherfucking-E-D. Dogged.
She gets out her Chapstick, liberally applies it, dabs a bit on her temples as well.

MARY

Normally I don't condone swearing. I think it's something people do when they don't have the vocabulary to express themselves properly, but even I, with my plenitudinous vocab, must admit -- every once in

a while, it's okay to get a bit
peppery -

INT. GREYHOUND BUS STATION - LOS ANGELES - NIGHT

Mary talks on a pay phone. No pacing, no fidgeting. She means business.

75.

MARY

I got him in trouble, Dad. I have to go find him and make it right. There's three places they could be headed.
She pulls a note pad out of her pocket, looks it over.

MARY

For each story, I've worked out an equation of potential human casualties, estimated property damage, availability of endlessly repeatable images, with bonus points for anything involving reporters in galoshes. There's no doubt in my mind. They're heading to the storm in Galveston.

INT. HOROWITZ HOUSE - NIGHT

Mr. Horowitz talks on the living room phone, his wife on the hallway phone - they look at each other in exasperation.

MR. HOROWITZ

Enough is enough. You've got to get home, turn in your crossword for next week -

MARY (O.S.)

I can't think of work at a time like this!

MRS. HOROWITZ

You can't chase that boy any more. If he doesn't appreciate you it's ridiculous to -

INT. GREYHOUND BUS STATION -- LOS ANGELES - NIGHT

Mary screams into the phone.

MARY

Ridiculous? Mom! How many times did you propose to dad?

INT. HOROWITZ HOUSE - NIGHT

Mr. and Mrs. Horowitz think about it for a second.

76.

MRS. HOROWITZ MR. HOROWITZ

Twice. Seven times.

INT. GREYHOUND BUS STATION - LOS ANGELES - NIGHT

Mary yells on the phone. PASSENGERS start to stare.

MARY

I rest my case! If you gave up the first time dad said no then I wouldn't exist. Telling me to give up so soon on my potential husband-to-be, birth father of my twelve future children and adoptive father of my gerbil Carol -- you might as well be saying that you wish you had given up too and that you never married dad and that I'd never been born. Is that what you're saying?

INT. HOROWITZ HOUSE - NIGHT

Mrs. Horowitz looks at her husband.

MRS. HOROWITZ
Give Steve my best.

MR. HOROWITZ
Be careful.

MRS. HOROWITZ
And eat! A biscuit, anything. A V8 wouldn't kill you.

EXT. GREYHOUND BUS STATION - LOS ANGELES - NIGHT

Elizabeth stands at the bus to Oklahoma City, a pile of Leachman signs at her feet. Mary approaches.

MARY
Sure you don't want to come along?

ELIZABETH
I wish, but I only left enough cat food out for two days. I'll miss you guys!
Elizabeth hugs them both, jumps on the bus. Howard and Mary watch as she struggles to her seat with all the signs.

77.

INT. HOWARD'S CAR - PARKING LOT - NIGHT

Howard and Mary fasten their seat belts.

HOWARD
This storm could be bad. Sure you want to drive into it?

MARY
How bad could it be?

TNT. CNN ATLANTA - NIGHT

The CNN METEOROLOGIST points at the map, images swirling around the Gulf Coast.

CNN METEOROLOGIST
Hurricane Lorraine, currently rated category four, expected to hit landfall by tomorrow evening. Making the situation even more frightening, that area of Texas currently in the midst of its worst tornado season in history. Tornado images appear on the map.

CNN METEOROLOGIST
And here's where it gets interesting.
A black swarm graphic appears as well.

CNN METEOROLOGIST

Add the looming cicada migration to the mix and no one knows just how devastating this storm could be.

INT. WEATHER CHANNEL STAGE - DAY

A WEATHER CHANNEL METEOROLOGIST talks on camera, completely calm.

WEATHER CHANNEL METEOROLOGIST

Category four hurricane, an F-3 or "severe" tornado, billions upon billions of cicadas -- collectively now being termed a "category fifteen winged tornadocane".

78.

INT. KTFT TELEFUTURA TV STATION - DAY

The Hispanic KTFT METEOROLOGIST points to the green screen.

KTFT METEOROLOGIST

Tornadocane.

INT. KPRC HOUSTON TV STATION - DAY

The KPRC ANCHOR is on camera.

KPRC ANCHOR

Tornadocane.

INT. KLUG HARLINGTON TX TV STATION - - DAY

The KLUJ METEOROLOGIST looks at his notes, tries to keep it together, half talks to himself.

KLUG METEOROLOGIST

God really hates us now.

EXT. 1-45 TO GALVESTON TX - DAY

Torrential rain pelts the line of vehicles heading north. The only movement in the southbound lanes -- Howard's car.

EXT. GALVESTON WATERFRONT - DAY

In full rain gear, Hartman walks past rows of boarded up businesses. Steve follows him with the camera. Angus, Doug and Josh are close behind. The rain is deafening, the wind ridiculous. It's all Hartman can do to stay on his feet.

HARTMAN

(yelling his head off)
And this time, the warnings were hard to ignore. One Galvestonian told us "tornados, we can handle. Hurricanes we can handle. Bugs we can handle. Put 'em all together and that's a storm I don't need to see". A wise man indeed. Something off to the side catches Hartman's eye -- it's a picnic table blowing down the street.

79.

HARTMAN

Oooh! Get that!

Steve gets the shot then pretends to make adjustments to his camera while he discretely scans the area, on the lookout for Mary.

INT. HOWARD'S CAR ON I-45 TO GALVESTON TX - DAY

Howard and Mary can barely see out the window. The car inches along.

Mary digs in a KFC bag, takes out a handy wipe, starts cleaning her body with it.

MARY

And when I met Steve, I knew right away we had a lot in common. We're both in the media, we both love crosswords, we both love words. We both felt this unexplainable connection, no matter how much his instinct might be to fight it. That's okay. We just have to get to know each other better, that's all.

She uses the wipe on her face, gets a bit on her lip and the taste is awful. She rolls down the window, closes her eyes and gently sticks her face out to rinse with rain water. The car hits a flooded patch of the road. A wave of mud washes up and smacks Mary right in the face.

MARY

Crap.

She starts the handy wipe bath all over again. A nervous Howard speaks up.

HOWARD

I saw Steve talking to you... He wasn't very nice.

Mary makes herself busy putting the handy wipe in her Kroger bag then looks out the window.

MARY

If there's one thing I learned from crossword puzzles it's that you can't give up.

(MORE)

80.

MARY (cont'd)

Sometimes you run into a doozy and you think you'll never be able to solve it in a million years. If you quit, you're right, but if you stick with it, you'll figure it out. Eventually.

She looks at Howard.

MARY

I have to give it one more try. I have to fix the mess I made with his work, then maybe he and I -- For the first time, she doesn't seem so sure. Howard notices.

HOWARD

You know what my favorite part of doing crosswords is? When you know something you didn't think you knew.

Mary thinks about it, then turns back to looking out the window.

MARY

Me too.

EXT. GALVESTON PIER - DAY

Hartman stands in the middle of a pier that looks moments away from being carried out to sea. Steve shoots from a spot on the pier a few feet closer to shore but not much safer.

HARTMAN

Paula, this pier was closed to the public twenty-four hours ago, and for good reason. Steve inches a bit closer for the shot, his footing unstable. Josh moves in and hangs on to Steve to keep him steady.

HARTMAN

As I stand here, I can actually feel the structure moving under my feet. The only thing between me and the limitless depths of the sea is this two-by-four railing that - The railing flies off. Hartman drops to his knees and crawls to the other railing then hangs on for dear life. Steve and Josh struggle to hang on to the camera and each other.

81.

Steve signals, to Hartman to wrap it up fast. Hartman talks slower than ever.

HARTMAN

And Paula I have to tell you, not only has my hearing been permanently damaged by the sheer force of the rain hitting my eardrums, but at this point, I'm beginning to wonder if I'll even make it out alive. He raises his head up for the big finish, gets hammered by the wind and rain.

HARTMAN

This is Hartman Hughes, reporting live from Galveston, Texas. Steve and Josh start backing up off the pier with Hartman crawling behind them. Steve yells back to him.

STEVE

You had to get the pier shot. Had to. Just about got us all killed. Happy? Hartman points in the water, yells.

HARTMAN

OH MY GOD! IT'S MARY!

Steve jumps, looks to where Hartman is pointing -- it's a plastic bag floating by in the water.

STEVE

You're such an asshole. Steve walks off the pier mad as hell.

HARTMAN

Come on, that was funny. You have to admit... Stevie?

EXT. HOWARD'S CAR ON 1-45 TO GALVESTON TX - DAY

The northbound lanes now empty, Howard's car is the only one on the road.

82.

1-45 TO GALVESTON TX - DAY

INT. HOWARD'S CAR ON

Howard stares out the window, the first look of real fear on his face.

HOWARD

Hang on.
He hits the brakes, starts backing up as quickly as possible.
Mary looks ahead -- sees what looks like a tornado up ahead.

MARY

Oh my God.
Howard backs under an overpass, points to a protected area up the cement embankment.

EXT. 1-45 OVERPASS - DAY

Mary and Howard run up the cement embankment as the rain and winds swirl all around them.

HOWARD

We'll just have to wait for this to pass, then we'll keep going. It'll be okay.
They look down to the road just in time to see Howard's car picked up and blown right through the underpass, landing on its side in a ditch fifty yards away.

MARY

Crap!

INT. HOROWITZ HOUSE - NIGHT

Mr. and Mrs. Horowitz watch images of the storm on TV, the captions read "BREAKING NEWS: KILLER STORM". Mrs. Horowitz crosses herself. Mr. Horowitz puts an arm around her.

MR. HOROWITZ

She's fine. She's fine.

MRS. HOROWITZ

This is all your fault.

MR. HOROWITZ

I know.

83.

EXT. GALVESTON WATERFRONT - NIGHT

Steve is asleep sitting upright in the back of the rental van. A hand caresses his cheek.

GIRL'S VOICE

Steve... Oh Steve...
Steve awakens in panic.

STEVE

GO AWAY, GO AWAY, GO AWAY!

13

Steve looks at the person in front of him -- it's a scared year old MEXICAN BOY.

STEVE

Who the hell are you? What are you

doing?

MEXICAN BOY

They pay me twenty dollar to wake you.
Steve looks outside the van, sees Doug and Hartman laughing hard. The Kid scurries out of the van. Angus gets in, opens up his laptop.

STEVE

You seen her?

ANGUS

She's too smart to come here during this.
Steve looks around like he's crazy.

STEVE

No, she's here somewhere. I can feel it.

EXT. 1--45 OVERPASS - NIGHT

As the storm calms around them, Howard and an exhausted Mary crouch in the sheltered area. They use a little flashlight on Mary's keychain to watch debris blowing by.

MARY

I spy with my little eye a chemical element from group two of the periodic table.

84.

Howard points to a discarded fireworks casing at their feet.

HOWARD

Barium... I spy with my little

-

eye... a transition metal
She barely has the energy to get the word out.

MARY

Cobalt.
Mary points to a steel belted tire on the ground, lays back and shuts her eyes. Howard takes something out of his - it's a pocket, puts it in her hand. Mary looks at it shrivelled, sculpted apple head. She smiles, hardly able to keep her eyes open.

MARY

Mother Teresa.

HOWARD

My best seller. I'm an apple sculptor.
She's quiet for once. Howard watches her drift off.

HOWARD

I went to school for physics but got bored. Now I just make these and sell them on appleheadsrule.com. I was going to give that one to my girlfriend in Bangor but I can make her another one. She'd probably prefer a Stephen Hawking one anyway. Science is her life. Not like my girlfriend in Tacoma. She's really into Jesus. Same as my other girlfriend in Duluth.
He waits for a response - nothing.

HOWARD

Maybe I'll meet them in person one day. They're just so far away and I don't get out much, not farther than the apple orchard or the post office anyway.

MARY

But you're out now.
He's a bit surprised she was listening.

85.

HOWARD

I saw the people on TV fighting for Baby Peggy. It wasn't far from my house, and the people there looked nice enough, so I went. I thought I had everything I needed at home but then I thought, maybe there's more.

MARY

Maybe there is.

HOWARD

Can I tell you something?
Mary nods.

HOWARD

I like your eyeballs.

MARY

They're fuscous, that means -

HOWARD

Brownish gray. I know.
They both smile.

EXT. GALVESTON WATERFRONT - DAY

Downed trees, flooded lawns, debris all over the place but all in all, not too bad.

EXT. 1-45 TO GALVESTON TX - DAY

The storm subsided, nothing but a light rain. Howard and Mary stand beside the car on its side in the shallow ditch.

MARY

You know what I'd call this?

HOWARD

Quagmire?

MARY

Imbroglia, Howard. That means we're screwed.

86.

INT. CNN ATLANTA - DAY

Dan Corbitt talks to another EXEC. at the water cooler.

CORBITT

Storm's over. What else is happening?
The Exec shrugs and yawns.

EXT. CITY STREET - DAY

A BUSINESSMAN picks up a newspaper, looks at the front page - it's a photo from the Westminster Garden Show.

BUSINESSMAN

Sloooowww news day.

INT. THE TIMES-PICAYUNE NEWSPAPER OFFICES - DAY

A couple of bored REPORTERS sit tapping pens on their desks.

FIRST REPORTER

Fire, a car chase, anything?

SECOND REPORTER

There is nothing going on, man.
Nada.

EXT. PASTORAL FIELD NEAR EUNICE, LOUISIANA - DAY

15 DEAF KIDS bounce up a small hill, followed by three female TEACHERS. When they finally reach the top, they all stop. Ahead of them, down the hill, the Tri-Parish Fair - complete with carnival rides, pie contests, music, dancing, rodeo and livestock shows.

TEACHER

(speaking while signing to the kids)
Who's ready for some fun?
The deaf kids start running down the hill, straight for the petting zoo.

87.

Just when they're close enough to smell the goats, the ground gives way from the back and the kids drop out of sight front of the Teachers - each kid taken totally off having heard the dropping behind them. A gully instant puff guard, not fast dust settles to reveal a gaping hole in the earth. The Teachers drop their picnic baskets and scream their heads off.

INT. RURAL HOME - DAY

A messy living room, the TV on, nobody watching it.

ON THE TV: "BREAKING NEWS - ABANDONED MINE DISASTER".

CNN ANCHOR

An abandoned mine shaft on the outskirts of Eunice, Louisiana. The children, apparently all hearing impaired, enjoying a trip to the county fair, blissfully unaware of the danger that lay ahead.

INT. FOX NEWS STAGE - DAY

The FOX NEWS ANCHOR is on camera.

FOX NEWS ANCHOR

No word yet on injuries. No word on when, or if, rescuers will be able to reach the special needs children. Well continue to bring you news as this tragic story unfolds.

EXT. 1-45 TO GALVESTON TX - DAY

As Mary and Howard try to tip the car, Mary is distracted by

a rental van barreling down the interstate, northbound.

INT. RENTAL VAN ON 1-45 - DAY

Steve drives, Hartman is next to him. Angus is in the back with Doug and Josh.

88.

HARTMAN

Tornadocane my ass. Where the hell were the cicadas? Retards in a mine shaft, now that's a story.

STEVE

They're deaf, asshole.
They spot Mary and Howard up ahead in the ditch, next to the car on its side.

HARTMAN

Look, it's your girlfriend.

STEVE

We're not stopping.
Hartman grabs a piece of paper, writes fast.

ANGUS

We can't just leave them.

STEVE

Highway patrol's down here every hour. It's not like they'll rot in the ditch.
As they get closer, Hartman rolls down his window, folds up the piece of paper.

STEVE

What the hell are you doing?

HARTMAN

Getting some fresh air. It helps my pores.
Steve tries to grab the paper.

STEVE

Hughes!

HARTMAN

Yes, Steven?

STEVE

You're not telling her where we're going.

HARTMAN

Aren't I?

89.

Hartman leans out the window with the paper, waves it around. Steve reaches for it, one hand on the wheel. As he grabs Hartman, the truck starts swerving.

ANGUS

Christ, you two. You'll get us killed.
Angus leans into the front seat, tries to steady the steering wheel.

EXT. 1-45 TO GALVESTON TX - DAY

Mary spots the rental van approaching, swerving - Hartman waving a piece of paper out the window. As the van passes by, Hartman lets the paper go.

INT. RENTAL VAN ON 1-45 - DAY

Hartman rolls up the window, happy with himself. Steve slugs him in the arm.

STEVE

Asshole!
Hartman laughs, rubs his arm in pain.

EXT. 1-45 TO GALVESTON TX - DAY

Mary rushes to the ditch, picks up the paper.

MARY

"Eunice, Louisiana. Please..."
She stops reading, looks a bit uneasy. Howard steps forward, grabs the note.

HOWARD

"Please meet..."
He looks at Mary, disgusted, continues reading.

HOWARD

M-E-A-T. "Please meat me there.
XO Steve".

MARY

See? He needs me, if only to help
with his spelling.

90.

HOWARD

No kidding.
She rushes to the car, Howard joins her. They push the car ey with everything they have, it tips back onto its wheels. Th jump in the car and start it up.

- DAY

EXT. TRI-PARISH FAIR GROUNDS

SECURITY PERSONNEL guard the closed entrance and turn away pissed off FAIR PATRONS.
At the edge of the fair grounds, the ferris wheel casts a shadow over the rescue site. The whole area has been overtaken by RESCUERS and their equipment. POLICE guard the tape to keep ONLOOKERS back. Local MEDIA circulates.
Hartman kneels at the back of the ambulance, holding the hand of one of the Teachers. Steve gets it on camera, all the while looking around, a bit paranoid.

HARTMAN

And what went through your mind
when you realized they were gone?
The Teacher just bawls. Hartman turns to the camera.

HARTMAN

Grief too strong for words. That's
the best way to describe this
tragic, tragic scene. One minute,
a merry day at the fair. The next
minute, helpless babes savagely
sucked into the menacing abyss.
The Teacher bawls even harder. Hartman gives her a "there
there" then continues talking to camera.

HARTMAN

And here's how hopeless the rescue looks at this moment. The earth surrounding hole is far too perilous for anybody to approach on foot. Moving heavy rescue equipment in too close could mean death for the rescuers as well. Its cold down there, wet, dark, probably a few snakes and rats moving around.

(MORE)

91.

HARTMAN (cont'd)

If the hearing impaired children even survived the fall, they're undoubtedly dealing with serious injuries, although some may have had their fall cushioned by their deaf brothers and sisters who dropped before them. Nevertheless, they've got to be in complete misery. Even if one them is telling the next "it'll be okay", it's not like he, or she, can hear a word of it.

INT. MINE SHAFT - DAY

The coal dust covered kids sit in the dark, totally unharmed. A few of them play rock, paper, scissors. Others braid each other's hair. An 8 year old boy signs to his friend.

DEAF BOY

(SUBTITLED)

I don't know what the hell happened but I smell a lawsuit.

EXT. TRI-PARISH FAIR GROUNDS - PUBLIC VIEWING AREA - DAY

Behind the taped off area, a crowd is forming. A school bus pulls up and drops off a bunch more people. They place their stuffed animals, notes, flowers at the tape barrier. A bunch of them start crying. Among them, some familiar faces from the Oklahoma protestors.

INT. TRI-PARISH FAIR GROUNDS - RESCUE SITE - DAY

Rescuers keep a safe distance from the perilous hole. A RESCUE SUPERVISOR oversees the effort, watches as a bucket is attached to the old crane, barely big enough for one person. A FIREMAN gets in the bucket, doesn't fit. He gets out. A SKINNY FIREMAN is pushed forward. He gets in. The bucket is lowered into the ground. Hartman jumps in front of the scene. Steve follows with the camera.

HARTMAN

To some, a simple crane. To the trapped, innocent, special children -- the answer to their prayers. The cable lowering the bucket jerks and stops. The crowd gasps. Hartman stays on camera.

92.

HARTMAN

Or is it?

The cable jerks and begins moving again.

HARTMAN

Only time will tell.
Through the crowd, Steve sees a WOMAN who looks like Mary from the back. He freezes, then realizes it's not her.
Total relief.

- PUBLIC VIEWING AREA - DAY

EXT. TRI-PARISH FAIR GROUNDS

The crowd, now even larger, waits.

- DAY

INT. HOWARD'S CAR NEAR THE FAIR GROUNDS

Howard searches for a space to park. Every inch of the place is packed with cars, trucks, buses. Mary prays.

MARY

Please let those kids be okay.

- RESCUE SITE - DAY

EXT. TRI-PARISH FAIR GROUNDS

A line of cameras fixed on the opening to the hole.
At the ambulances, the Teachers stand wrapped in blankets watching, crying.
Steve steps a bit closer to the hole with his camera.

RESCUER

Hey! Buddy! Back it up.
Steve backs up, refocuses on the hole as the cable rises.
- it's one of the Kids
Finally, a smiling little face appears
being carried up by the Fireman.

FIREMAN

They're all okay!
The rescuers cheer. The Teachers bawl.

EXT. TRI-PARISH FAIR GROUNDS - PUBLIC VIEWING AREA - DAY

The crowd goes nuts.

93.

- RESCUE SITE - DAY

EXT. TRI-PARISH FAIR GROUNDS

Hartman jumps in front of Steve's camera.

HARTMAN

Elation here in Louisiana but the danger, far from over as rescuers bring these children up one grubby little face at a time.
Hartman looks off to the side, holds up a finger like he's trying not to cry. He signals Steve to cut.

HARTMAN

Remind me next time to mention Jesus.
Still on the lookout for Mary, Steve's not even listening.

--- PUBLIC VIEWING AREA - DAY

EXT. TRI-PARISH FAIR GROUNDS

Mary and Howard run through the crowd. Mary spots George, the Protestor from Oklahoma and his Wife.

MARY

George, Lydia! What's going on?
Lydia hugs her.

PROTESTOR WIFE / LYDIA

They got eleven out. All fine,
thank God. More coming up.

- RESCUE SITE - DAY

EXT. TRI-PARISH FAIR GROUNDS

Steve films as the rescued kids are wrapped in blankets, the Teachers hysterically crying.
The Fireman brings up another one. As he's raised to ground level he calls out to the Rescue Supervisor.

FIREMAN

That's the last of them!
As he hands the kid to safety, the cable jerks. He gets out of the basket just in time before the whole thing - basket and cable -- snaps off and drops into the hole.

94.

EXT. TRI-PARISH FAIR GROUNDS - PUBLIC VIEWING AREA - DAY

Mary celebrates with the other onlookers as if she forgot why she's there.
She glances toward the rescue site and spots Steve on the far side. She gets excited all over again, ducks under the tape and runs toward him.

EXT. TRI-PARISH FAIR GROUNDS - RESCUE SITE - DAY

Steve films Hartman.

HARTMAN

A happy ending that's left parents across this country wondering - how can I keep my family safe from abandoned mines? Are there abandoned mines in my backyard? Is my child's school built on top of an abandoned mine?
Steve spots Mary, running toward him.

STEVE

No, no, no.

HARTMAN

And how, oh how, can these death traps be avoided?
Mary drops right into the abandoned mine.

INT. CNN ATLANTA - DAY

A monitor displays the current broadcast: "Breaking News: Abandoned Mine Accident"

CNN ANCHOR

Mary Horowitz.
A painful high school photo of Mary appears on the screen. Bad hair, bad make-up, ridiculously large smile, unfortunate frilly chemise.

INT. OFFICE - DAY

A GUY watches the news on his laptop.

95.

NEWS ANCHOR

Mary Horowitz.

- DAY

INT. ATLANTA CITIZEN NEWSPAPER OFFICES

Staff members huddle around the TV.

ANOTHER NEWS ANCHOR

Mary Horowitz.

- MEDIA CAMP - DAY

EXT. TRI-PARISH FAIR GROUNDS

As all the other Journalists scramble, Hartman and Steve are a bit stunned. Angus joins them, puts his phone on speaker.

CORBITT (O.S.)

Shame about your girlfriend in the pit, Steve, but we've got the inside advantage here so let's use it.

Steve shakes his head, not impressed.

Angus takes the phone off speaker, steps aside to talk to Corbitt. Steve's phone rings. He answers it, listens, cringes.

STEVE

Mrs. Horowitz.

INT. HOROWITZ HOUSE - DAY

Mrs. Horowitz cries into the phone.

MRS. HOROWITZ

We're coming! Tell her to hang on!

Mr. Horowitz runs down the stairs with luggage and Carol the gerbil.

EXT. TRI-PARISH FAIR GROUNDS - MEDIA CAMP -- DAY

Steve listens to the phone and glares at Hartman.

STEVE

You and your husband stay put, Mrs. Horowitz.

(MORE)

96.

STEVE (cont'd)

They'll have her out before you even make it to the airport...

She'll be fine. I promise.

He hangs up, looks at Hartman.

STEVE

She better be.

Hartman looks away, guilty.

INT. MINE SHAFT - DAY

Complete darkness. Mary's voice full of misery.

MARY

Eight letter word for... my life
has come to this.
There's a bit of shuffling around in the dark.

MARY

Not destiny, that's only seven
letters. Not fortuity - that
sounds more like when good things
happen to people like finding a
quarter in the sofa or something.
I mean the not so great stuff
that's bound to befall some people
more than others. Fate's nasty
cousin, I mean.
Suddenly Mary's face lights up with her mini keychain
flashlight.

MARY

F-O-R-E-D-O-O-M. Foredoom.

A

Mary shines the light on her knee. Her previous cut is now
gaping wound, blood is all over the place.

MARY

Crap.

EXT. TRI-PARISH FAIR GROUNDS - PUBLIC VIEWING AREA - DAY

State Troopers hold back the growing crowd. Howard looks
toward the rescue site, worried. He tries to sneak under the
rope but a State Trooper points him back.

97.

- RESCUE SITE - DAY

EXT. TRI-PARISH FAIR GROUNDS

Near the hole, the Rescue Supervisor consults with the other
rescuers and a MINE SAFETY EXPERT.

RESCUE SUPERVISOR

The new equipment is going to take
a while. Let's try and find out
what kind of shape our victim's in.

RESCUER

Can we lower a phone down in there?

MINE SAFETY EXPERT

Not at those depths, this whole
area is bad enough above ground.
We'll never get a signal down
there.

RESCUE SUPERVISOR

Let's keep it simple. Get me a
flashlight, a piece of paper and a
pencil.
An unenthusiastic Hartman steps in front of the camera, the
Rescuers in the shot behind him. Doug films. Hartman goes
to speak but can't seem to summon his on air personality.

HARTMAN

Behind inc... Oh what's the point?
Hartman walks away moping.

EXT. TRI-PARISH FAIR GROUNDS - MEDIA CAMP - DAY

Steve paces. Angus hangs up the phone.

ANGUS

Corbitt wants you to go on air to talk about Mary. An interview with the boyfriend.

STEVE

I'm not her boyfriend!

ANGUS

Close enough. Come on, we need this.
Hartman steps up, listens in.

98.

ANGUS

Fox has already got their hands on everything but her panty size.

HARTMAN

Fox scooped us? Our Mary? The bastards.
Steve glares at him.

INT. FOX NEWS - DAY

A RETIRED MINE SUPERVISOR comments as a graphic shows the cross section of the mine. As he talks, the graphic animates with a female figure in red boots tumbling into the mine and bouncing off the walls all the way down -- and it plays over and over.

RETIRED MINE SUPERVISOR

That area was never reinforced up above, no need since the whole eastern tunnel was blocked off in the late Seventies. Of course that would also affect the air quality down there.

ANCHOR

That has to be bad news for Mary Horowitz, wouldn't you say?

RETIRED MINE SUPERVISOR

Definitely not looking good.

INT. HOROWITZ HOUSE - DAY

Mr. Horowitz snaps the TV off, furious and worried.
An upset Mrs. Horowitz cracks open the curtains, looks outside.

MRS. HOROWITZ

Who are these people?

INT. HOROWITZ HOUSE - DAY

A slick, young JOURNALIST stands on the sidewalk in front of the Horowitz house.

99.

SLICK JOURNALIST

Mary Horowitz, described by those who know her as smart, talkative, very much the girl next door, that is, if the girl next door has a genius level IQ. She's worked for eleven years as the crossword

constructor for the Atlanta Citizen
and lives right here with her
parents.

Mr. Horowitz opens the door and is swarmed by Reporters. The
Slick Journalist gets right in there.

MR. HOROWITZ

No, Mary doesn't live with us. She
just came over one day and won't
leave, but she has her own place.

SLICK JOURNALIST

Can you comment on the rumors that
Mary's fall into the mine was a
suicide attempt?

MR. HOROWITZ

That's ridiculous. Not our Mary.
The word depression isn't in her
vocabulary. Well, it's in her
vocabulary, obviously, but no,
nothing ever gets her down. Steady
as a rock, that one.

INT. MINE SHAFT - DAY

Mary shines her light around on the walls of the mine. Black
soot everywhere, a mine track, abandoned equipment.

MARY

I am not afraid. I am not fearful,
pusillanamous, nor am I affrighted.
Suddenly in the light - a face. Mary screams her head off.
The face doesn't budge - it's a LITTLE DEAF GIRL.

MARY

Oh my God, they forgot one! You
scared the crap out of me.
The girl just stares at her.

100.

MARY

I'm sorry, can you hear me, I mean
at all? Do you have sensorineural
hearing loss or conductive? "Deaf
people can do anything except
hear." You know who said that?
Doctor Jordan, first deaf President
of Gallaudet U. Maybe you'll go
there one day. That is, unless we
perish down here.
Mary smiles. The Little Deaf Girl just stares back.

- DAY

EXT. TRI-PARISH FAIR GROUNDS - RESCUE SITE

A YOUNG RESCUER arrives with the flashlight, pencil and
paper.

YOUNG RESCUER

What should we say?

RESCUE SUPERVISOR

Tell her help is on the way. We
just need her to confirm she's
conscious -- here, give me that.
The Supervisor grabs the paper and pencil, scribbles the
note, ties it to the flashlight.
They look up to the thin nylon rope now in place of the
snapped cable. The Rescue Supervisor signals for them to
drop it. He attaches the flashlight/note, waves to the crane

op.
The crane swings over, lowers the rope into the hole.

INT. MINE SHAFT - DAY

Mary talks to the little Girl.

MARY

And then there's black lung disease, also a problem in coal mines. Chronic cough, breathlessness, cyanosis - that's where your skin turns purple -- There's a CLINK behind Mary. She turns her light onto the area, sees the flashlight and note hanging from the thin rope. Mary grabs the flashlight, turns it on, reads the note.

101.

- RESCUE SITE - DAY

EXT. TRI-PARISH FAIR GROUNDS

At the hole, the crane reels in the rope, swings it away from the hole. They see the note attached, flashlight gone.

RESCUE SUPERVISOR

That's a good sign right there.
The Young Rescuer grabs the note.

RESCUE SUPERVISOR

What's it say?

UNFOLDS

The rescue team gathers around. The Young Rescuer the note, reads it slowly and loudly.

YOUNG RESCUER

"I think you mean, am i conscious,
not am I conscience."

RESCUE SUPERVISOR

Jesus Christ.

YOUNG RESCUER

"Conscious means alert and awake.
Conscience is your inner morality gauge, you know, the thing that stops you from doing bad things, e.g. killing, stealing, harming helpless animals, and whatnot."

RESCUE SUPERVISOR

Can we leave her down there?
He motions for the Rescuer to continue.

YOUNG RESCUER

"To answer your question, yes I am conscious. My leg is bleeding but I'll probably live."

RESCUE SUPERVISOR

Great.

YOUNG RESCUER

"Yours truly, Mary Horowitz."
The other rescuers start to disperse.

RESCUER

"P.S. Did anybody lose a little deaf girl?"

102.

The rescuers stop in their tracks.

RESCUER

"I found one. She's fine... Other than not being able to hear, I mean."

INT. FOX NEWS DESK - DAY

"Alive!" splashes across the screen.

FOX NEWS ANCHOR

Breaking news from Louisiana, we've just received word that abandoned mine victim Mary Horowitz is alive.

TNT. HOROWITZ HOUSE - DAY

Mr. and Mrs. Horowitz watch the "Alive!" news coverage. Mrs. Horowitz cries. Mr. Horowitz comforts her.

TNT. FOX NEWS DESK -- DAY

The mine coverage continues.

FOX NEWS ANCHOR

Also in the mine, a hearing impaired child overlooked in the earlier rescue. Speculation now as to whether or not Mary Horowitz intentionally heaved herself into the mine to save the child after rescuers ignored her pleas.

INT. CNN HEADLINE NEWS -- DAY

NANCY GRACE is locked and loaded.

NANCY GRACE

They missed a child? They missed a child? Can't these people count? Thank goodness for this woman, this Mary Horowitz - let's bring up that picture of her again. The picture of Mary appears on the monitor.

103.

NANCY GRACE

We're looking at an American hero, folks. It it wasn't for Mary Horowitz, the child would have never been found.

EXT. TRI-PARISH FAIR GROUNDS - MEDIA CAMP - DAY

Steve, Hartman, Doug and Josh breathe a sigh of relief.

STEVE

Thank Christ. Now if they can only get her out of there. Angus hangs up his phone.

ANGUS

Corbitt wants you on in five. Steve sees he has no choice. He nods. Hartman puts an arm around him.

HARTMAN

I'll be gentle.

- DAY

EXT. TRI-PARISH FAIR GROUNDS - RESCUE SITE

The Rescue Supervisor talks to the Mine Safety Expert.

RESCUE SUPERVISOR

We've got the whole country watching now, can't afford any more mistakes. The crane from Shreveport is a wash. We're looking at as much as sixteen hours to bring the other one in.

MINE SAFETY EXPERT

Sixteen hours? If we've got carbon monoxide -

RESCUE SUPERVISOR

There's air coming in through the top.

MINE SAFETY EXPERT

Even at a concentration of 5ppm, they could suffocate... We do not have sixteen hours.

104.

The Rescue supervisor looks toward the hole, of the severity and hopelessness of their situation showing on his face.

RESCUE SUPERVISOR

Let's at least get some food and water down there. The rope we've got on there now will handle a small load -- if that damn crane holds. He looks up at the old crane, worried.

MINE SAFETY EXPERT

Gas masks, oxygen supply, how long? The Rescue Supervisor points around the area - look where we are.

RESCUE SUPERVISOR

As fast as we can get them here.

MINE SAFETY EXPERT

Might not be soon enough.

INT. FOX NEWS - DAY

- this

The Retired Mine Supervisor is back with a new graphic time an image of adult and child sitting in the mine as gases swirl around them and they eventually slump down onto the mine floor. It plays on a loop.

RETIRED MINE SUPERVISOR

They're pretty much done.

EXT. TRI-PARISH FAIR GROUNDS - PUBLIC VIEWING AREA - NIGHT

As night falls, the crowd at the fence starts lighting and candles, passing them around. Among them, George, Lydia, now Carlos, the backpack dispensing hot cocoa guy from Oklahoma. They all look on, worried. Howard stands at the barrier looking more worried than anybody. Elizabeth pushes through the crowd to him. She's wearing red rubber boots.

ELIZABETH

Howard!
She hugs him.

105.

HOWARD

She'll be okay. She will.
Howard looks behind him at the ever growing crowd.

HOWARD

All this. For her.
He manages a sad smile.

EXT. TIMES SQUARE - NIGHT

The headline "Mary Watch" is broadcast on a mammoth screen over Times Square.

INT. TRAIN STATION - NIGHT

PASSENGERS are glued to a news ticker that reads "MARY WATCH,

RESCUE UNCERTAIN".

EXT. LOADING DOCK - NIGHT

Evening edition newspapers are loaded onto a truck. On the front page - "Mary Watch".

INT. 24 HOUR LAUNDROMAT - NIGHT

A pair of LAUNDRY SORTERS are glued to the Mary Watch coverage on TV.

FOX NEWS ANCHOR

The question on everybody's mind tonight is, who is Mary Horowitz? Atlanta affiliate WAGA looks into the mind of an everyday hero. WAGA Reporter CINDY emotes like her life depends on it.

WAGA CINDY

No one will argue that the city of Atlanta has always been a breeding ground for heroes. Jimmy Carter, Hank Aaron, Ryan Seacrest and now... Mary Horowitz. As the country wonders about what would drive this woman to such an extraordinary act, we went straight to those closest to her.

106.

INT. LIVING ROOM - DAY

WAGA Cindy interviews a sweet but NERVOUS OLD LADY.

NERVOUS OLD LADY

Mary Horowitz was one of my second grade students. Brilliant girl... Darling. Always a smart dresser as I remember. And she once brought me soup when I wasn't well.

EXT. CITY STREET - DAY

WAGA Cindy reports.

WAGA CINDY

Mary Horowitz, a hero who's devoted her life to caring for the sick and elderly. Clearly a woman with a higher purpose.

INT. WAL-MART - DAY

A nervous WAL-MART MANAGER poses in the shoe department, holding a pair of red rubber boots. An excited FEMALE REPORTER points to the boots, talks on camera.

FEMALE REPORTER

Exactly like the boots worn by Mary Horowitz when she slipped into the mine. Were the boots responsible for the accident? The manufacturer refuses to comment. For now, the deadly footwear remains on store shelves, leaving consumers to pay the ultimate price.

INT. TEENAGER'S ROOM - NIGHT

Three FOURTEEN YEAR OLD GIRLS shop online. They click on "Mary Boots" - a picture of red rubber boots comes up. A

STATES".

banner underneath reads "NOW BANNED IN 4

FOURTEEN YEAR OLD GIRL

Oh my God, we so have to have them!

107.

INT. MINE SHAFT - NIGHT

Mary talks to the Little Deaf Girl.

MARY

Rhinolith, that's the real word. Rhino is nose, lithos means stone. Nose stone. You know what that is? Snot.

INT. TV REPAIR SHOP - DAY

WAGA Cindy interviews a 30ish male SCIENTIST.

SCIENTIST

I knew Mary Horowitz in college. She caught me trying to cheat off her physics midterm, lectured me for an hour and when she finally stopped talking I asked her out. She said no, said it was because I was, get this - hebetudinous. Can you believe? He walks away, bitter, gets back to work on NASA rockets.

INT. LIBRARY - DAY

WAGA Cindy interviews an attractive male RESEARCHER as he puts away books. He talks as though it still stings:

RESEARCHER

We dated for a while but she ended it. Said she couldn't stand this - He points around 'to the library - you could hear a pin drop.

RESEARCHER

Whatever that means.

EXT. CITY STREET - DAY

WAGA Cindy continues her report.

WAGA CINDY

A heartbreaker, leaving behind a trail of devastation.

108.

INT. MINE SHAFT - NIGHT

Mary still talks.

MARY

And Archimedes, there's another one. He was into math, philosophy, all kinds of stuff, then one day he was working out an equation in the sand and somebody stabbed him. Crappy, I know.

EXT. TRI-PARISH FAIR GROUNDS - PUBLIC VIEWING AREA - NIGHT

A bus pulls up behind other parked and unloading buses. PEOPLE OF ALL AGES file off the buses, holding handmade "SAVE MARY" signs, stuffed animals, flowers, rosary beads, Kleenex. They head toward the fence to join the others.

EXT. TRI-PARISH FAIR GROUNDS - RESCUE SITE - NIGHT

Angus watches as Doug films Hartman interviewing Steve.

HARTMAN

Steve, tell us about Mary, your fiance struggling for her life at the bottom of the abandoned mine as we speak.
Steve glares at him. Hartman motions for him to go on.

STEVE

Mary... she's smart, incredibly smart. She talks a lot. Never boring, I'll tell you that much. He thinks about her, gets lost in it.

STEVE

Mary Horowitz doesn't pretend to be anything she's not. She's passionate, beautiful, real... and she definitely doesn't deserve to be where she is now.

109.

EXT. TRI-PARISH FAIR GROUNDS - PUBLIC VIEWING AREA - NIGHT

The spectators all gather, candles in hand, hands joined in silent prayer. An ELDERLY COUPLE hands Howard and Elizabeth candles. Howard looks around at the rest of the crowd - strangers watching, waiting, worried.

HOWARD

They don't even know her.

ELDERLY LADY

No, but they know what it's like to be alone, to need a helping hand.

That's a good enough reason to be here.

EXT. HOROWITZ HOUSE - NIGHT

NEIGHBORS hold a candlelight vigil on the lawn. The media catches every minute of it.

INT. BAR - NIGHT

Bar PATRONS are silent, glued to the "Mary Watch" coverage on the overhead TV.

EXT. MINE SHAFT - NIGHT

The old crane lowers the small rope into the hole, smoke seeping out of the motor. The Rescue Supervisor watches, anxious and helpless. The other Rescuers just watch. Nothing to do but wait.

INT. MINE SHAFT - NIGHT

Mary still talks.

MARY

Happenstance, I love that word too. And you know what else - Mary coughs. Before she has a chance to catch her breath, a rope with a small bag attached quickly drops next to her, the bag hitting the floor. Mary unties the bag and looks inside to find water and sandwiches.

110.

MARY

No dessert. Crappy. Did you know that the word dessert comes from an old French word that means "clear the table"? Sometimes I feel like dinner is just doing time so I can get to the point, and of course the point always involves sugar. Who needs - The Little Deaf Girl covers her ears, vocalizes as much as she's able.

LITTLE DEAF GIRL

Shut up! I can't hear you but you talk a lot. Totally catches Mary off guard. She fully takes that in. Her demeanor completely shifts, a calm washes over her.,

MARY

I know. She sits down.

MARY

I know. She notices the Little Girl's shoes are soaked. Mary moves next to her, takes off her rubber boots and puts them on the Little Girl. Mary puts an arm around her, holds her close at - softly, her side, then speaks like she's a different person to herself, the Little Girl unable to read her lips.

MARY

I'm not good at... silence. "Mary doesn't do quiet", that's how my grandmother always said it. "What's that hush?" she'd holler at a party. "It's Mary about to talk", then she'd laugh and laugh and laugh. Everybody would... But

I knew something they didn't - that if you keep talking, if you keep on talking, you don't hear people telling you that you're different. You don't hear people saying they don't like you. And if you're talking, you just might not hear it when some kid... calls you a freak. Mary's eyes start to well.

MARY

I just wanted to be normal, that's all. Steve said I was. She thinks about it, laughs a bit.

MARY

I'm beginning to think newsmen can't entirely be trusted. She buttons up the Little Girl's sweater.

MARY

The truth is normal is -- not me. She seems surprised she said it out loud. There's relief in it.

MARY

My friends, the people I've met over the past week, they're not normal either. They're more interesting, more original, more real, more rare. She suddenly gets it, brightens up.

MARY

That's where I fit.
- and for
She thinks about it, in silence. The sadness fades the first time, she's comfortably quiet. She smiles at the Little Deaf Girl. The Little Deaf Girl smiles back. And they sit -- Mary totally calm. Mary hears something in the distance - a gentle PLINK PLINK PLINK she couldn't have heard while talking. She picks up the flashlight, moves toward the noise. In a corner of the mine, a water drip hits on some old rusted mining tools, including two rusty vice grips. The Little Girl coughs. Mary looks back at her, concerned.

MARY

Little Deaf Girl, it's time for us to go home.

EXT. TRI-PARISH FAIR GROUNDS - PUBLIC VIEWING AREA - NIGHT

Howard, Elizabeth and Carlos watch from the fence.

112.

ELIZABETH

What's taking so long?

INT. HOROWITZ HOUSE - NIGHT

Mr. and Mrs. Horowitz are glued to the TV.

MRS. HOROWITZ

Why aren't they doing anything?
Mr. Horowitz grabs her hand.

INT. 24 HOUR LAUNDROMAT - NIGHT

The Laundry Sorters still glued to the Mary Watch coverage.

INT. BAR - NIGHT

Quiet tension in the bar as the patrons all watch CNN.

CNN ANCHOR

A tense night in Eunice, Louisiana.
Hartman what can you tell us?

EXT. TRI-PARISH FAIR GROUNDS - RESCUE SITE - NIGHT

Doug films Hartman. In the shot behind him, smoke seeps out of the old crane.

HARTMAN

They've lowered food and water into the depths of this abandoned mine. The last task of this archaic crane that finally blew its motor. We've been told the new rescue equipment won't make it until daybreak. Until then, all we can do is wait, hope, and of course pray. There's a commotion at the rescue site. Doug zooms in.

AT THE HOLE:

The rope hanging into the hole is moving. Rescuers get as close to the hole as possible.

RESCUE SUPERVISOR

Jesus Christ. Tell me she's not -

113.

INT. MINE SHAFT - NIGHT

Mary cuts two pieces of excess rope off the bottom, attaches each it to the hanging rope using the vice grips as makeshift climbing ascenders.

MARY

After I got kicked out of Girl Scouts, while the other girls were learning how to sell cookies, I was at home reading the biography of Sir Edmund Hillary. Mary motions for the Little Deaf Girl to jump on piggyback. She jumps up onto Mary's back, still in the red rubber boots. Mary starts juggling up the rope, the vice grips and rope pieces acting like ladder steps. They start rising up slowly. Not an easy task. Mary struggles every step.

EXT. TIMES SQUARE - NIGHT

A shot of the moving rope up above the hole is broadcast. People on the street stop and watch.

INT. BAR - NIGHT

The Guys at the bar stand up to watch to the shot of the moving rope on TV.

INT. HOROWITZ HOUSE - DAY

Mr. and Mrs. Horowitz on the edge of their seats in front of the Mary Watch TV coverage.

INT. MINE SHAFT - DAY

The Little Deaf Girl helps Mary move one of the vice grips up

the rope.

MARY (V.O.)

If life is like a crossword puzzle
then its worth, its greatness, its
raison d'efre should be judged in
the same way.

114.

Mary grasps the cable with everything she has, pulls up
another step.

MARY (V.O.)

Is it solvable?
One of the red boots drops down into the mine shaft.

EXT. TRI-PARISH FAIR GROUNDS - RESCUE SITE - NIGHT

Every eye is on the moving rope.

INT. MINE SHAFT - NIGHT

Mary looks up as the lights above get closer and closer.

MARY (V.O.)

Is it entertaining?

EXT. TRI-PARISH FAIR GROUNDS - RESCUE SITE - NIGHT

As the Rescuers, Firemen, Troopers, Media and Public look on,
Mary at last appears above ground, the little Girl in her
arms.

MARY (V.O.)

Does it sparkle?
The crowd goes nuts. Cameras flash. Rescuers rush to help
them onto the ground.
An Ambulance Attendant grabs the little Girl, wraps her in a
blanket. Mary's eyes flutter in the blinding lights of the
cameras pointed at her. She scans the entire crowd.

MARY (V.O.)

And does it fit?
Her eyes fix on a spot in the crowd. She starts running.

INT. HOROWITZ HOUSE - NIGHT

Mrs. Horowitz hands her husband the box of Kleenex as they
wail and watch Mary on TV, safely above ground.

115.

INT. REST STOP - NIGHT

The customers eat pie while they're glued to images of Mary
and the little Girl.

NORM

Good for her. Good for her.

INT. ATLANTA CITIZEN NEWSPAPER OFFICES - NIGHT

The staff breathe a sigh of relief when they see Mary alive
on TV. Jim Soloman stares at the images, happy, acquiescent.

JIM SOLOMAN

We're going to have to give her her
job back.
He shakes his head, laughs.

INT. BAR - NIGHT

Everybody in the bar celebrates. The BARTENDER rings the bell.

INT. TINY APARTMENT - NIGHT

The Career Day teacher watches Mary on TV, wipes her eyes.

INT. 24 HOUR LAUNDROMAT - NIGHT

The Laundry Sorters celebrate, then realize their laundry is all pink.

INT. ATLANTA ROW HOUSE - NIGHT

The Large Kid from the Career Day class walks into the living room where his DAD has Mary Watch on TV. The Kid holds up a crossword, half done, and he's not happy about it.

LARGE KID

Did you start this and not bother finishing it? Do you know how much work goes into making these things? Honestly, Dad.
The Kid grabs a pencil to finish the puzzle.

116.

EXT. NEWSSTAND - NIGHT

Mr. Takihashi watches Mary on TV, wipes his tears.

EXT. TRI-PARISH FAIR GROUNDS - RESCUE SITE - NIGHT

Mary adjusts her eyes to the flashing lights, looks around. An Ambulance Attendant tries to attend to her leg. She waves him off. In bare feet, blood running down her leg, limping, she starts running away from the site toward the media. Steve's watches, genuinely happy to see her. Hartman nudges Doug to get the camera on Steve.

HARTMAN

First interview is ours. Here comes our girl. Steve, you ready? Grab her arid kiss her then let me start with the questions.
Doug focuses in on Steve. Hartman holds the crowd back so Mary can get to him.
Mary runs toward them -- and keeps on running, right past Steve's open arms.
She heads for her friends at the fence - Howard, Elizabeth, Carlos, George, Lydia, all of the other Protestors. She swan dives right into them. They catch her.

HOWARD

You're okay.

MARY

I am.
Cameras go off all around them.

EXT. HIGHWAY - DAY

A Greyhound bus travels.

MARY (V.O.)

My brain is full of all kinds of information, some of it useful, some of it not.

(MORE)

117.

MARY (V.O.) (cont'd)
I've recently discovered, hiding in
the back of my mind, somewhere
between astrophysics and a catalog
of candy bars of the Seventies, a
previously hidden bit of knowledge
more important than everything
else. It is this...

INT. GREYHOUND BUS - DAY

Mary sits right at the front talking to the female BUS

DRIVER.

MARY

In solving the puzzle of life
there's one thing you must do.
She points to the side of the road. The bus pulls over.

MARY

Find somebody just as normal as
you.
Mary stands up, gets off the bus.

MARY

if not a whole bunch.
Howard, Elizabeth, George, Lydia, Carlos, Clyde, a few old
Ladies, a bunch of other Protestors file off the bus. Mary
keeps talking to the bus driver.

MARY

And don't be a slave to your loins.
Trust me on that one.
Mary taps the side of her head.

MARY

You need to let this be the boss of
you. Cornprende ?

EXT. MARY'S NEIGHBORHOOD - ATLANTA - DAY

A huge gated property. Mary opens the gate and walks up a
tree covered path, Howard right behind her, all the other
Protestors following. For once, Mary isn't doing all the
talking.

HOWARD

That bus driver looked like Francis
Galton. Did you see that?

118.

MARY

He's my favorite behavioral
geneticist in the world.
They continue on through an open yard.

HOWARD

In retrospect, and I say this with
some hesitation because I don't
like to have actual regrets so I'll
just say I'm beginning to perpend -

MARY

Good one.

HOWARD

I'm beginning to perpend whether or
not eating three bags of caramel
corn for lunch was the smartest
thing to do. Honestly I'm this
close to spewing...

Mary reaches the end of the path and stops, waits for
everybody else to catch up. They're in complete awe of the
monstrous Georgian estate before them.

MARY

My grandma left it to me. My
parents won't stay here. And for
me it was always too... quiet.
She looks at her new friends.

MARY

Not anymore.
They head toward the house.

THE END