

SINGLE BLACK FEMALE

Written by

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AKIL PRODUCTIONS, Inc.

COLD OPEN

FADE IN:

INT. MARY JANE'S HOUSE - KITCHEN - WEE HOURS OF THE MORNING

CU of two nine-inch baking pans filled with cake batter inside of the oven. We watch as the cake rises.

CU of two oven mitts removing them from the oven.

From the POV of inside the oven, we get glimpses of the woman putting the cake pans aside and then removing her hands from the oven mitts. She's a BLACK WOMAN.

After a beat, we hear KNOCKING and a DOORBELL RINGING. She moves out of frame and after a beat the KITCHEN LIGHTS CUT OUT.

The only light is from the illuminated clock that reads:
2:07 AM.

CUT TO:

INT. MARY JANE'S HOUSE - HALLWAY - CONTINUOUS

We pick her up in the dark house. We see hints of a gorgeous home and we catch a glimpse of her amazing cheek bones and the rag tied around her head. Pan down to see a baseball bat in her ring-free left hand. She reaches her security monitor but she can't discern who it is, HIS head is down. After a beat:

BLACK WOMAN

Who is it?

He lifts his head, revealing a handsome BLACK MAN in a nice suit and loosened tie at her door. He's all smiles.

BLACK MAN

It's me.

BLACK WOMAN

(to herself)

Shit.

DOORBELL RINGS again.

BLACK MAN

Hello?

He's a little tipsy.

BLACK WOMAN
Is everything okay?

BLACK MAN
Yes -- actually no. Look, I need to see you. I know it's late or early, depending on your perspective. It's just that my car drove me over here. I told it not to, but you know how pushy foreign cars can be.

He takes a beat, gathers his truth.

BLACK MAN.
I know I haven't called you in a minute, but I needed to see you.

She turns away from the peephole. After a long beat she takes another look through the peephole. He does look good and sincere.

BLACK WOMAN
(to herself)
Damn.
(then)
Hold on.

BLACK MAN
You're calling the police aren't you?

BLACK WOMAN
Maybe.

SMASH CUT TO:

INT. MARY JANE'S HOUSE - MASTER BEDROOM - SECONDS LATER

The light cuts on to reveal a well appointed room that's a bit of a mess.

QUICK CUTS OF:

She shoves her laptop and Kindle and vibrator under the bed.

She shoves the books, magazines, dirty dishes and wine glasses scattered throughout under the bed too.

She snatches off all of the Post-its covering the walls.

CUT TO:

INT. MARY JANE'S HOUSE - MASTER BATHROOM - MOMENTS LATER

Her bathroom is equally messy.

QUICK CUTS OF:

She straightens the product and makeup strewn across her countertop.

She snatches off the Post-its all over the mirror and near the toilet tissue holder.

She rips off the head rag, shakes out her wrapped head. Seconds later -- perfect hair.

She pulls off her sweats and stores them under the sink.

She whips her bra off from underneath her T-shirt with precision quickness.

Finally, she takes a look at herself in the mirror -- she's very sexy in her nearly see-through T-shirt just covering her tush. Then, she runs out of the bathroom.

We stay on the empty bathroom. Seconds later she rushes back in and bee-lines for the toilet. She forgot one! She flips up the toilet lid and snatches the last forgotten Post-it.

She runs out. She runs back in and checks herself in the mirror. She likes what she sees.

CUT TO:

INT. MARY JANE'S HOUSE - MASTER BEDROOM - MOMENTS LATER

She and the Black Man have passionate, sweaty sex.

CUT TO:

INT. MARY JANE'S HOUSE - MASTER BEDROOM - FORTY MINUTES LATER

Our Black Woman emerges from her bathroom to find her handsome Black Man asleep. She smiles. It's nice to have a man in her bed. She puts on her satin pillowcase, then quietly, but awkwardly, slips into bed and faces him, smiling and watching him sleep. Then Rihanna's voice creeps in to score this moment our girl is having.

Music Cue: "CALIFORNIA KING BED" by Rihanna

BLACK WOMAN
(whispers to herself)
God, if he's mine, please give me a
clear sign.

He moves and she removes her hand, then a beat later, while
still asleep -- HE VOMITS! Our Black Woman SCREAMS.

BLACK WOMAN (CONT'D)
Oh my God -- Oh my God -- Oh my
God...

CUT TO:

INT. MARY JANE'S HOUSE - MASTER BATHROOM - MOMENTS LATER

She struggles to get him to her toilet, dead weight weighs a
ton.

BLACK WOMAN
Come on, come on... not on my rug!

Inches away from her toilet he's about to hurl again, but she
stretches his head to the toilet and he makes it in the nick
of time. While he continues to vomit, she falls on the floor
to catch her breath.

BLACK WOMAN (CONT'D)
Oh my God, Oh my --

Then she leaps up and dry-heaves over her sink. It's a two-
part harmony of disgust. After a minute, she gathers herself
and prepares a warm, wet towel... then she laughs.

BLACK MAN
(groaning)
It's not funny.

BLACK WOMAN
Unfortunately it is.

She takes a seat near him, he turns around and she hands him
a towel. He cleans himself up a beat. She then turns a bit
serious:

BLACK WOMAN (CONT'D)
Look --

BLACK MAN
Look, don't say "look." I know
what "look" means.
(MORE)

BLACK MAN (CONT'D)

And I'm not drunk just to be drunk,
I had to do something to tell you
what I need to tell you -- I love
you.

Rihanna's lyrics pipe up and underscore this moment.

BLACK WOMAN

Don't say that.

BLACK MAN

Why can't I say it if I mean it?

She smiles. It feels good to be loved. He goes to kiss her and she doesn't stop him. After a beat, he pulls away quickly and throws up again.

BLACK WOMAN

I'll get some sparkling water,
it'll settle your stomach.

CUT TO:

INT. MARY JANE'S HOUSE - KITCHEN - MOMENTS LATER

She pulls the Pellegrino from the fridge. As she walks back to the bedroom, the trail of his clothes from the living room to the bedroom makes her laugh -- she's giddy with the idea that someone loves her.

Her fantasy is interrupted by a sharp pain on her heel. She lifts her foot up to see what caused the pain -- his PLATINUM WEDDING BAND is stuck to the bottom of her foot. She pries it out of her foot to get a closer look.

SMASH CUT TO:

EXT. MARY JANE'S HOUSE - FRONT DOOR - WEE HOURS OF THE MORNING

She pushes and kicks her half-dressed Handsome Man out of the front door. She even gets in a few good licks upside his head.

BLACK WOMAN

Liar! I let you kiss me with vomit
on your breath!

As he scrambles to get himself together, she moves out of frame.

BLACK MAN

I meant what I said. I love you.

Then out of nowhere, a strong blast of water hits his face. Our Black Woman continues to hose him down until he reaches his car.

BLACK MAN (CONT'D)

Are you crazy?!

Neighborhood dogs start BARKING. That makes her stop the water torture.

BLACK WOMAN

Kiss my ass --

She throws his keys at his head.

BLACK WOMAN (CONT'D)

And get the hell out of here.

BLACK MAN

I can't drive, I'm drunk.

BLACK WOMAN

Good. There's a tree down the street. Hit it.

With one final glare, her theme music kicks in:

Music Cue: "FLY" by Nicki Minaj, featuring Rihanna

Our Black Woman goes by the name MARY JANE PAUL. She walks back toward her house straight to camera (a'la Angela Bassett after she set the car on fire -- you know the movie) as his car drives off behind her. On this, we FREEZE FRAME on Mary Jane.

CUT TO:

MAIN TITLES

OVER BLACK we see the following type appear:

42% of black women will never marry.

A beat later, the following type appears:

This is just one black woman's story... Not meant to represent all black women.

A beat later, we see the title:

SINGLE BLACK FEMALE

CUT TO:

MORE MAIN TITLES

The following are vignettes of Mary Jane alone in her home (they will change each week) that end in freeze-frames to allow for the stylized opening credits crawl.

CUT TO:

INT. MARY JANE'S HOUSE - MASTER BEDROOM - LATER

Mary Jane puts her Post-it notes back on the wall. We're close enough now that we can see that they are various inspirational quotations. She stops and reads one:

She sticks it on the wall. CU of the quote. "But the Bible says, even though we may blow it every day, God's mercy is fresh for us every morning." It's attributed to Kathie Lee Gifford. FREEZE-FRAME.

CUT TO:

EXT. MARY JANE'S HOUSE - DRIVEWAY - LATER

Mary Jane marches down the driveway, headed to her trash bins at the curb. She struggles to carry the forbidden linens (comforter, duvet, pillows, throw pillows, sheets) and eventually stuffs them into the proper trash bin. Her older, white neighbors look on quizzically and wave politely. She smiles and waves back. FREEZE-FRAME.

CUT TO:

INT. MARY JANE'S HOUSE - TV ROOM - LATER

Mary Jane does yoga along with Jeanette Jenkins, aka Hollywood Trainer, who is on her flat-screen TV. Mary Jane and Jeanette move into downward facing dog. FREEZE-FRAME.

CUT TO:

INT. MARY JANE'S HOUSE - KITCHEN - LATER

Mary Jane ices her cake. She licks her finger. FREEZE-FRAME.

CUT TO:

INT. MARY JANE'S HOUSE - MASTER BATHROOM - LATER

We pan across her messy bathroom (and more Post-its) to find her showering. We see a hint of her naked body. FREEZE-FRAME.

CUT TO:

INT. MARY JANE'S HOUSE - WALK-IN CLOSET - LATER

Now in her bra and panties, she's in her to-die-for custom-built closet. Her shoe game is insane. Her accessory table is endless. But her purse wall is RIDICULOUS. She holds up a purse to see if it will match the five outfits she has hanging on five separate hooks (labeled Monday thru Friday). FREEZE-FRAME.

CUT TO:

INT. MARY JANE'S HOUSE - LATER

Mary Jane leaves the chaos of her closet and the disaster of her bedroom. She emerges into the rest of her home. We finally get to see it -- it's pristine and magazine-ready with an amazing view. It truly underscores the success that she is. When she's perfectly in frame, we: FREEZE-FRAME.

CUT TO:

EXT. MARY JANE'S HOUSE - DRIVEWAY - DAY

Mary Jane backs out her Panamera Porsche from her two-car garage. The ROAR of her engine:

END MAIN TITLES

And back into the world. Music fades out and on this, we:

CUT TO:

INT. MARY JANE'S CAR/DRIVING - DAY

NPR pipes through the speakers. They're reporting on women in Zimbabwe raping men for their sperm.

NPR REPORTER (V.O.)

The Zimbabwean women have been accused of raping men and stealing their semen. One victim claims that he was hitchhiking and a car full of women picked him up. He alleges that one of the women threw water in his face and injected him with something that made him sexually aroused.

Mary Jane shakes her head at the news. The car phone RINGS, interrupting the radio. She looks at the caller ID and it says MOMMY DEAREST.

MARY JANE

Good morning, Mom. I'm running late and I'm still in the car.

HELEN (V.O.)

Then you shouldn't have answered. Call me when you get to work.

She hangs up. NPR kicks back in.

NPR REPORTER (V.O.)

The women, due in court, have been charged on seventeen counts of aggravated indecent assault - as Zimbabwean law does not recognize the act of a woman raping --

Another call interrupts the broadcast. It says, NEVER ANSWER, so she doesn't.

MARY JANE

Oh My God!

If Mary Jane were white, she would be pale. She looks as if she's seen a ghost. From her POV we see what she sees -- Handsome Black Man's CAR wrapped around a tree. As she panics and her nostrils start to flare uncontrollably, we:

FADE OUT:

END OF COLD OPEN

ACT ONE

FADE IN:

INT. MARY JANE'S CAR/STREET - MOMENTS LATER

Mary Jane trembles in fear, almost creating another accident trying to pull over on the side of the road. She finally gets the car parked. She sits there a minute. She tries to stop one hand from trembling by holding it with the other trembling hand.

MARY JANE

Please God don't let him be dead.

She finally opens up the car door and gets out.

CUT TO:

EXT. STREET - CONTINUOUS

Mary Jane dodges traffic and runs across the street to the accident, fearing with each step that the words she uttered came true. But it's not her Handsome Black Man. It's some OTHER GUY with a similar car... and he's okay, just a broken, bloody nose from the airbag. As Mary Jane thaws out from what could have been her worst nightmare, we hear:

OTHER GUY

Mary Jane Paul?

She snaps out of it, just as the AMBULANCE WORKERS and POLICE OFFICERS begin to all recognize her.

OTHER GUY (CONT'D)

OMG! It's Mary Jane Paul.

MARY JANE

Hi. You okay?

OFFICER

He's fine, was texting while driving. Maybe you can report that on your news show. Atlanta needs to pass the no-cell phone law with or without the rest of Georgia.

She's still visibly shaken.

OTHER GUY

I know you probably get this all the time, but can I get a picture with you? Wife watches you every day.

OFFICER

Uh sir, you were just in an accident.

OTHER GUY

Just a quick one.

OFFICER

Fine, but I want one too.

The Other Guy snaps a pic of he and Mary Jane himself. The officer hands his cell phone to Other Guy, then poses with Mary Jane.

OTHER GUY

Smile, Mary Jane.

As she awkwardly smiles, we:

CUT TO:

INT. SNC NEWS NETWORK OFFICES - LATER THAT MORNING

Mary Jane rushes into what looks like a typical news office. Because it's a fairly new network, the walls and furnishings are new, but there are still cubicles filled with chaos. She crosses through, smiling and waving at all who pass her by, while talking on her Bluetooth. We eavesdrop on her conversation as we follow her down the corridor:

MARY JANE

Mom, if I lose you, I'll call you right after my --

She checks her watch -- she's late.

HELEN (V.O.)

Did you hear me? He had some fast tail girl in my house!

(coughs)

He can't pay a bill or buy a loaf of bread, but he got the nerve to screw some whore in my house?!

She arrives at a bank of elevators. She presses the up button.

MARY JANE

Mom, I'm about to go into an elevator.

(lying)

I'm losing you --

HELEN

I can hear you.

MARY JANE

Oh, no. I think I lost you. If you can hear me, I'll call you back. Bye.

The elevator arrives, she steps on. She takes a deep cleansing breath as the doors shut.

CUT TO:

INT. SNC NEWS NETWORK OFFICES - EXECUTIVE LEVEL - MOMENTS LATER

She rushes off the elevator onto the executive floor. She smiles at the RECEPTIONIST.

MARY JANE

Greg's conference room?

The receptionist nods. Mary Jane rushes down the long corridor, where the ASSISTANTS sit outside of their bosses offices. Mary Jane offers them polite morning salutations and professional smiles. They eagerly return the gesture with smiles. When she gets to the corner office, the corresponding assistant offers this:

GREG'S ASSISTANT

They're almost done.

MARY JANE

Well, good, there's still time.

She answers her phone quickly.

MARY JANE (CONT'D)

Mom, I'll call you back.

She hangs up and removes her Bluetooth earpiece, then enters the office and we follow her into the:

CUT TO:

INT. SNC NEWS NETWORK OFFICES - PRIVATE CONFERENCE ROOM -
CONTINUOUS

Mary Jane opens the door to see her bosses, GREG (the white, balding man) and KEVIN (the white younger one with the goofy motif tie) as well as a few COLLEAGUES sitting around the conference room table. There's a long awkward pause. KARA LYNCH (a 40s white woman, armed with great style, concealer, and a jug of water) jumps in, covering:

KARA
How's your mom?

MARY JANE
(catches on to the lie)
She's fine.
(then re: her BUZZING
phone)
She's calling now.

GREG
No, no take the call.

MARY JANE
She's fine. I'll call her back.
Where are you guys?

GREG
We're done.

Greg and TIM get up to leave.

GREG (CONT'D)
Great meeting, Kara. Will you get
Mary Jane all caught up?

KARA
Of course.

Mary Jane notices that no one is really making eye contact as they file out, except Tim.

TIM
I love the African women story.
Can't wait to see what you do with
it tomorrow.

And just like that they're gone. Once the room is empty:

MARY JANE
Did you sell it? Or did you just --

KARA

Hey. Not fair. I pitched my ass off. Had my visual aides and everything.

Kara holds up an issue of *Psychology Today*. On the cover is a makeup free, dark-skin, black woman with traditional African-American features. The headline reads: **BLACK WOMEN UGLY?**

KARA (CONT'D)

I know how important that story is to you.

(then)

Where were you?

Mary Jane can't answer because thinking about the reasons why she's late upsets her. Her nostrils flare.

KARA (CONT'D)

You okay?

MARY JANE

I'm fine.

KARA

They think it's a blog story.

MARY JANE

It's only five days out.

KARA

Exactly. It's old.

MARY JANE

Here's another way to angle it -- Black women aren't ugly, we're invisible... I'll use quotes from Ralph Ellison.

KARA

(sarcastic)

Ralph Ellison?! Set the DVR... right after I Google him to figure out who he is.

MARY JANE

I'm calling them out on this one. How can a major magazine get away with this crap and no one even raises an eyebrow?

KARA

I'm disgusted too, but it's their network and Greg is not going to let you do the story. But we got our African story.

MARY JANE

That's your story.

KARA

They got word that the African women raping men for sperm will be *The Daily Show's* opening monologue and they want us to have our take for tomorrow's show to build on the water cooler talk.

MARY JANE

So now we're basing our programming on what another network is doing?

KARA

Don't act like that's new.

MARY JANE

We sold this show as part news, part my platform.

KARA

Oh, that's funny. I thought up until now it was our platform.

MARY JANE

I said our.

KARA

Look, we'll get to do more of your platform when your ratings get better. Until then, I could use your suggestions on rapey Africans.
(then)
I have to go check on the show.

Mary Jane nods and Kara walks out, leaving her alone. Mary Jane's PHONE RINGS. It's MOMMY DEAREST. She doesn't want to answer, but on the last ring she picks up.

MARY JANE

Hey Mom.

INTERCUT WITH:

INT. PARENTS' HOUSE - BEDROOM - SAME TIME

HELEN PATTERSON, Mary Jane's sickly 73-year-old mother, who clearly was a looker in her day, sits in bed watching game shows on mute.

HELEN

You didn't call me back. You ignoring me like your father?

MARY JANE

(checks her watch)

Did you take your medicine on time?

HELEN

Mmmph, that boy doesn't do anything on time. Wasn't even born on time.

Mary Jane lets out a frustrated sigh then makes a three-way call.

INTERCUT WITH:

INT. PARENTS' HOUSE - DEN - SAME TIME

PATRICK PATTERSON, Mary Jane's older brother, who is clearly worn out on life, picks up. He's watching a poker match on TV.

PATRICK

Hello?

MARY JANE

Patrick, can you please take Mom a glass of water and her medicine upstairs?

PATRICK

(mad and unaware his mother is on the call)

I already did.

HELEN (V.O.)

No you didn't.

Patrick hangs up on both of them.

MARY JANE

Okay, so that's done. You want me to talk to Paul about the girls?

HELEN

I don't need you doing everything.
Can't I just vent?

MARY JANE

(rolls eyes)

Of course you can. Look, I'm on in
a few.

HELEN

(coughing)

I know. Don't wear that ugly
orange lipstick you had on
yesterday.

MARY JANE

It was coral.

HELEN

It's attacking your face. Don't
follow trends, set them. And yes,
I want you to talk to Paul. But
don't be hard on him.

MARY JANE

Bye, Mom. Happy Birthday.

HELEN

Nothing's happy about it. Bye.

Mary Jane hangs up and a beat later, her nostrils start to flare uncontrollably. She's about to cry. But before she will ever let that happen, she pinches her inner-thigh really hard. After a beat, you can see the water in her eyes dry up and her nostrils stop flaring. She then stands, straightens herself up and walks out the conference room. On the empty room, we:

FADE OUT:

END OF ACT ONE

ACT TWO

FADE IN:

INT. SNC NEWS NETWORK OFFICES - MAKEUP ROOM

Mary Jane is in the mirror, applying her own makeup, while her WHITE MAKEUP ARTIST sits nearby flipping through a magazine. Other MAKEUP ARTISTS are touching up the WHITE TALENT sitting in their chairs.

There are TV monitors in the room. We can see MARK BRADLEY currently on the news, but we can't hear him because the volume is turned really low.

Mary Jane finishes up and heads out the door and down the:

CORRIDOR

She smiles, waves, says to hi to all that pass her. She runs into Kara and the SEGMENT PRODUCERS. They walk together.

KARA

You okay?

MARY JANE

Great.

KARA

You get a chance to go over the stories?

MARY JANE

Yep.

They come to a fork in the road. Kara and the producers go down one hall, and Mary Jane heads for the big door that leads to the live set.

KARA

Have a great show.

Kara splinters off.

KARA (CONT'D)

You too.

Mary Jane heads into the:

INT. SNC NEWS NETWORK - LIVE SET - CONTINUOUS

Mary Jane breezes on set and stands to the side as anchor Mark Bradley wraps up his live show.

MARK BRADLEY

Up next is *Talk Back with Mary Jane Paul*. You can go anywhere for your news, I appreciate that you come here first. I'm Mark Bradley. Have a great rest of the day.

He holds his smile for the camera.

ANGLE ON: Mary Jane, who has a camera in her face, recording her opening teaser near the bullpen.

MARY JANE

I'm Mary Jane Paul. Thank you for joining me at this hour. The President declares that "enough is enough." He wants the media, yes-us, to leave his wife and daughters alone.

She holds her last look before relaxing.

STAGE MANAGER

Hold, hold, hold for clip.

On a nearby Live TV we see a clip of President Obama talking to a small group of reporters. Mary Jane and the mini-crew stay alert. The President finishes his statement.

ANGLE ON: Mary Jane back live.

MARY JANE

Also, Facebook is going public. With a five billion initial public offering, this is expected to be the largest IPO ever to emerge from Silicon Valley. All that and more when we come back.

She holds the smile and everyone dismantles and heads to the desk. Mary Jane and Mark cross paths as she takes her seat at the desk.

MARK BRADLEY

Hey, you didn't call me back.

MARY JANE

I went to bed early.

MARK BRADLEY

Spoiler alert. She's a vampire.
If you can DVR it tonight, I got a
window between eight and ten.

MARY JANE

Date. Nice tie.

MARK BRADLEY

Nice bra. Get taped up.

He looks at her -- really looks at her in the eye, then:

MARK BRADLEY (CONT'D)

What's going on with your eyes?

She smiles. Somebody cares.

MARY JANE

Nothing.

MARK BRADLEY

Getting sick? Wellness formula and
Zong Gan Ling herbal pills. Get on
it. Break a leg.

Mary Jane watches Mark walk off for a beat, then turns her
attention to LARRY, the studio's union Sound Guy of many
years. He mics her.

MARY JANE

Larry, can you give me some extra
tape so I can hide my bra?

LARRY

(friendly flirtation)
You want me to tape it up for you?
You know me, I'm here to help.

MARY JANE

(friendly banter)
As long as your wife is cool with
you taking on a mistress.

LARRY

I've seen your shoes, can't afford
you. Have a great show.

MARY JANE

(laughs)
Thanks.

She places in her earwig.

MARY JANE (CONT'D)
Kara, you there?

KARA (V.O.)
Always.

Mary Jane smiles, they just made up.

MARY JANE
Okay guys and girls, show time.

She's counted in by a STAGE MANAGER:

STAGE MANAGER
Five, four, three, two --

CUT TO:

INT. PARENTS' HOUSE - DINING ROOM - LATER THAT DAY

Everyone is jubilantly singing HAPPY BIRTHDAY by STEVIE WONDER. Everyone is Mary Jane, her 72-year-old father, PAUL PATTERSON SR., Patrick and his girlfriend, TRACY, and their 5-year-old daughter D'ASIA. Patrick's older daughter, NAIMA, 23, is there with her two girls (4 and 6). His other daughter NIECY, 19, is also there with her 1-year-old son TREYVION. They are all circled around Helen. It's her 73rd birthday and there are 73 candles on the cake that Mary Jane was baking earlier. They finish singing.

MARY JANE
Make a wish, Mommy.

She goes to blow out the candles but has a coughing fit instead. It turns serious -- water, pats on the back, and arms pulled above her head don't make it subside... The panic doesn't end until Patrick deftly manages to get an oxygen mask around her mouth and instructs her to breathe. Mary Jane watches her father walk out of the room.

MARY JANE (CONT'D)
Mom, you okay?

HELEN
Yeah, blow out that inferno and cut up the cake so everybody can get out of my --

She coughs again.

PATRICK
Stop making her talk.

MARY JANE

I was just seeing if she's --

PATRICK

You see she's okay. You see I'm dealing with it, don't you?

TRACY

(eye-balling Mary Jane)

Here, Patrick.

Tracy, white and overweight, with residual signs of a rough life, hands him a glass of water and some pills. Mary Jane chuckles to herself and exits the room.

CUT TO:

EXT. PARENTS' HOUSE - DAY

Mary Jane finds her father on the front porch. She sits in the open chair next to him. He stares off into the neighborhood street. Mary Jane does the same... it's an opportunity to see that we are in a nice middle-class neighborhood with a lot of FRIENDLY NEIGHBORS waving from their cars, or as they pass by walking their dogs. Finally, Mary Jane rubs her father's back a bit.

MARY JANE

She's going to be okay.

PAUL SR.

I just wish she'd go on and die.

Mary Jane is stunned, especially coming from this sweet and gentle man.

MARY JANE

You don't mean that.

PAUL SR.

Yes, I do. And I hope you know that kind of love one day. I hope you all do.

She watches as he wipes his eyes.

PAUL SR. (CONT'D)

I'm going for a walk.

He gets up and leaves. She watches as her father, although old, nimbly walks down the street, stopping to pick up trash along the way.

CUT TO:

INT. PARENTS' HOUSE - KITCHEN - LATER

Patrick is washing the dishes, while Tracy puts the leftover food in containers (and in her mouth occasionally).

MARY JANE
Where is Mom?

PATRICK
(duh)
In the bed.

MARY JANE
You got her up there that fast?

PATRICK
Yeah, how about that?

MARY JANE
Can we stop?

PATRICK
I didn't start it.

He goes back to washing dishes. Tracy chuckles under her breath. Mary Jane rolls her eyes, then after a beat she goes behind him and hugs him.

MARY JANE
I love you.

PATRICK
Stop playing, get off me.

MARY JANE
Say it back. Tell me you love me.

PATRICK
Girl, go on now.

MARY JANE
(starts tickling him)
Say you love me.

She chases him around trying to tickle him, finally getting him to laugh. Mary Jane and Patrick let their moment linger.

Mary Jane starts to dry the dishes, while Patrick returns to washing them.

PATRICK

Let me get five hundred from you.

Mary Jane drops her shoulders. The two don't look at each other, then:

MARY JANE

If you need me to help you with a budget --

PATRICK

I "need" you to help me with five hundred dollars.

MARY JANE

Patrick, you stay here for free, you and Tracy eat free --

TRACY

You don't have to bring me in this.

MARY JANE

What happens to the money I got the state to pay you to take care of Mommy? Huh? Where does that go, Patrick?

PATRICK

Get out of my face with that.

MARY JANE

Hell, I should get half, since I still have to come over here and do it anyway.

PATRICK

Who got her breathing again?

MARY JANE

She wouldn't have the coughing fit if you would just give her her medicine on time.

TRACY

He gives her everything on time.

MARY JANE

How could he, if he's chauffeuring you to every grand opening of Chick-fil-A?

TRACY

It must feel real good to sit on
your throne.

MARY JANE

It does.

CUT TO:

INT. MARY JANE'S CAR/DRIVING - A LITTLE LATER

NPR is on again and they're talking about African women stealing sperm again. Close on a piece of cake riding in the front seat. Pan up to see Mary Jane driving. From her POV we see a young man standing on a busy street corner twirling a TAXES IN ONE HOUR sign -- this is her younger brother, PAUL PATTERSON JR. -- a kid from the skateboard generation, but so much more. He has cool tricks and when he demonstrates them, cars HONK for his aptitude. Mary Jane smiles to herself.

CUT TO:

INT. MARY JANE'S CAR - MINUTES LATER

Paul Jr. crams his sign in the back, then gets in the passenger seat, where he is presented with a slice of her famous carrot cake.

MARY JANE

Here.

PAUL JR.

Wow, you guys couldn't wait until I got off work? This might be her last birthday.

MARY JANE

Might not.

PAUL JR.

Was she happy?

Off her look, he laughs. She laughs.

MARY JANE

So let's talk about the girl you had over last night.

PAUL JR.

I didn't have -- hell let me stop lying before I even start. I gave up lying for Lent.

MARY JANE
Lent was five months ago.

Paul shrugs, takes a bite of his cake.

MARY JANE (CONT'D)
That was her only rule when you
moved back in.

PAUL JR.
I know. I got to get up out of
there.

MARY JANE
You do. And twirling a sign is not
going to get it. Or selling weed.

PAUL JR.
I knew I shouldn't have sold to
your friends. They're my best
customers, FYI.

MARY JANE
Paul --

PAUL JR.
Pauletta.

MARY JANE
Don't call me that.

PAUL JR.
I'm not calling you by that stupid
name you made up. Matter of fact,
you keep my secret and I'll keep
yours.

MARY JANE
It ain't that deep.

PAUL JR.
Oooo, you said "ain't."
(then indicating liquor
store)
Pull in here. I need to get Mom a
card.

MARY JANE
I put your name on the gift.

PAUL JR.
But I brought a girl home, so I
have to put in extra.

She pulls into the parking lot. Paul Jr. jumps out. Mary Jane lets out a deep sigh. Her PHONE RINGS. A number comes up. Her mood changes. She hits ignore then types something into her phone.

Paul Jr. gets back in the car. He proudly shows Mary Jane the card. It's a nude virgin figure representing Virgo.

MARY JANE

Really?

PAUL JR.

Thought it was a nice complement to the incense I got her.

MARY JANE

What so she can choke --

As he whips out the incense rolling papers fall out too.

MARY JANE (CONT'D)

Dude. Rolling papers?

PAUL JR.

Whatever industry you are in, it's all about the customer service. Ask your girl, Tonya.

MARY JANE

Stop selling to my friends.

PAUL JR.

Tell them to stop calling me.

Just then a call comes in. It's NEVER ANSWER #2 again. Mary Jane quickly hits ignore. Paul smiles.

PAUL JR. (CONT'D)

I got a few of those on my phone too. Who are you avoiding? David? Or is he Never Answer Number One?

MARY JANE

Why do you always bring him up?

PAUL JR.

You may be over him, but come on. Dude had season tickets for the Hawks.

Paul starts laughing to himself.

MARY JANE

What?

PAUL JR.

Every time I think of him busting
you going through his phone, I
howls.

Not only has he brought up the "forbidden subject," he laughs
at her painful memory.

MARY JANE

Shut up.

PAUL JR.

I mean, come on, that's classic.
You all in his bathroom, reading
all his texts, copying pictures.
He's walking around the house
looking for his phone asking if you
had it. You said no. Then beep --
beep. Beep-beep.
(mocking; commercial
voice)
David, Apple has found your iPhone.
It's in the hands of your lying-ass
girlfriend. I think I tell that
story at least once a day.

MARY JANE

Shut up.

Frustrated, she punches him, but it only makes him laugh
harder. Then, involuntarily, she lets a laugh slip out.

MARY JANE (CONT'D)

Lowest moment of my life.

PAUL JR.

One day you're going to actually
believe you're the baddest chick in
the game like you purport to be and
then your life will only get
better. Watch.

MARY JANE

Eat your cake.

She starts the car. He takes another bite of her cake.

PAUL JR.

That's good.

MARY JANE

(backing out)
Enjoy it. Might be dinner too.
Patrick got Tracy over there.

PAUL JR.

(laughs, then)

He likes them any way they come as long as they big, huh? Those two made a cute little girl, though. You see D'Asia? She's going to be tall and cute.

MARY JANE

Yeah well, it stops becoming cute when it's one more mouth to feed.

PAUL JR.

I was wondering how long it was going to take you to get to your soapbox.

She stops the car right in the middle of traffic. Cars HONK.

MARY JANE

What are you talking about?

Paul looks at her for a moment then realizes he said too much.

PAUL JR.

Girl, go.

MARY JANE

What are you talking about?

PAUL JR.

Man, I'm just eating my cake. I don't know nothing.

CUT TO:

INT. PARENTS' HOUSE - TV ROOM - FIFTEEN MINUTES LATER

Mary Jane storms in the TV room to find Patrick, Tracy, D'Asia, Niecy and her son, and Naima and her two girls watching a bad reality show.

MARY JANE

Niecy?! You're pregnant?! Again?!

PATRICK

You don't have to answer to her, Niecy.

MARY JANE

Oh, but eventually she will have to because inevitably there will be some stroller or outfit or car to get around in that Auntie needs to buy, huh Niocy?

Tears drop out of Niocy's eyes.

PATRICK

What is wrong with you?

MARY JANE

With me?!

Her father slips into the doorway unnoticed by Mary Jane.

MARY JANE (CONT'D)

I love you guys, I do, but we have too many damn kids in the family and not enough people feeding them.

PAUL SR.

That's enough.

MARY JANE

Seriously, anybody in here who has a job, raise your hand. Come on, put 'em up high.

PAUL SR.

I said that's enough, Letta.

Naima is the only one who slowly raises her hand.

PAUL JR.

(making light)

That's right, Naima, let her know she ain't the only one with a job.

(off Mary Jane's glare)

Don't eyeball me, I got a job and I'm going to school to be an architect.

After a beat, Mary Jane crosses to Niocy, kisses the top of her head and wipes the tears from her face.

MARY JANE

Tomorrow we're going to go see Dr. Hudson to get you checked out. Meanwhile stop drinking that soda, no tuna sandwiches, no aspirin, no baths. I think you have to stop nursing.

(MORE)

MARY JANE (CONT'D)
(kisses Treyvion)
Sorry Treyvion, but it's time to
drink regular milk. Goodnight,
take care of Mommy, okay?
(back to Niecy)
Call me in the morning.
Congratulations on the job, Naima.
(to all, exiting)
Good night.

CUT TO:

EXT. PARENTS' HOUSE - LATER

Mary Jane sits in her car, trying to gather herself, feeling guilty. After a beat, the PHONE RINGS and startles her. She looks at the caller ID. It reads NEVER ANSWER, so she doesn't.

FADE OUT:

END OF ACT TWO

ACT THREE

FADE IN:

INT. BOUTIQUE STORE - LATER THAT EVENING

Mary Jane is trying on shoes. The store is officially closed so she's been at it a while. The salesclerk is TONYA ANDERSON, a fashionista type that has made retail a career at thirty-ish. They are mid-discussion and all out of champagne.

MARY JANE

Patrick and his tribe think it's a damn bed and breakfast. Now my parents have so many mouths to feed, they can't keep up with the house anymore. It's falling apart. They worked so hard to move into that neighborhood... I don't get it. We all had the same upbringing -- college, Little League, debutante balls...

TONYA

I don't like those.

Mary Jane takes the shoes off and tries on another without missing a beat.

MARY JANE

I know Paul's in school, but damn, can't he graduate on time, stop changing his mind?

TONYA

It's like you said on your show a while back -- the middle class in America is now the ghetto. It's the haves and the have-nots now.

MARY JANE

Yeah and I have to have these.

TONYA

Those are nice.

MARY JANE

Ring them up before my conscious wakes up.

TONYA
You deserve them.

MARY JANE
I deserve them.

TONYA
You work hard for your money.

MARY JANE
I do work hard for my money.

TONYA
You give it to Patrick, it'll just
end up up his nose.

Mary Jane's CELL PHONE RINGS.

MARY JANE
Hey, hey. I can say that. You
can't say that.
(then answering her cell)
Hey Kara?

INTERCUT WITH:

INT. KARA'S HOUSE - STAIRS - SAME TIME

It's beautiful but messy home. She sits on the bottom of the
stairs.

KARA
So what did you think about my
guest for our rapey African story?
You saw my e-mail, right?

MARY JANE
Yeah.

KARA
Hold on a second --
(then yelling upstairs)
Get in the tub, Vander. Finn, feed
the dog.

MARY JANE
I like it. I think it will pair
really well with our first segment.

KARA
Great. You read the first half of
her book -- I'll read the second.
Oh, and I can't come out tonight.
(MORE)

KARA (CONT'D)

I already put on my sweats. Sorry.
See you tomorrow.

(as she's hanging up)

I will give you a candy IV if you
will just get in the damn tub!

Mary Jane hangs up. A moment later they hear TAPPING ON THE
GLASS DOOR. They both look up. Mary Jane turns ghost white.
Tonya waves the couple at the door away.

TONYA

We're closed!

We finally see who they see. It's her Handsome Black Guy and
his WIFE.

WIFE

(muffled)

Please?

TONYA

Should I let them in?

Handsome Guy finally sees Mary Jane and turns solemn.

TONYA (CONT'D)

I'm going to let them in. He
spends a lot of money on his wife
and I want a new iPad.

As Tonya walks to the door, he pulls his wife away. She
playfully tries to come back.

TONYA (CONT'D)

Come on in.

WIFE

Honey, she said --

HANDSOME MAN

It's okay.

Mary Jane finds her legs and crosses to the front of the
store in time to see them get into the car that was parked in
her driveway less than twenty-four hours ago.

TONYA

Isn't it beautiful when you
actually see it?

MARY JANE

What?

TONYA
Black love. It's possible.
(high-fives)
Keep hope alive.

CUT TO:

INT. HALO LOUNGE - A LITTLE LATER

Mary Jane and Tonya sit at the backlit bar... it casts a sexy glow on a sexy place. It's a hot night, but there are only a few other black folks in the place -- THREE BLACK GUYS and a BLACK CHICK. They talk over the loud bar and music.

MARY JANE
What are the odds they're going to come over here and talk to us?

TONYA
Hopefully not much. They look African. I'm not there yet.

They share a laugh.

MARY JANE
Well then what boat did Deleo come off of?

TONYA
His own. He is a Jamaican that lived in Ethiopia for a year. Big difference. Plus I gave Adamo another chance.

MARY JANE
You love the white guys.

TONYA
He's not white, he's Italian.

MARY JANE
Uh hello?

TONYA
Please, Italian guys are basically light-skinned black men.

They both laugh at the truth in this statement.

TONYA (CONT'D)
I'm going to take a leap in our friendship.
(MORE)

TONYA (CONT'D)

I know it's based on retail, but...
I think it's okay if you try to
work things out with David.

(off Mary Jane's reaction)

Hey, when Hillary kept Bill, it
gave us all a pass to keep our
dogs.

MARY JANE

He didn't cheat on me.

TONYA

All the more reason, 'cause you
look miserable here. Go home.

CUT TO:

INT. MARY JANE'S HOUSE - LATER THAT NIGHT

She enters, and immediately removes her shoes and bra. She's
a wiz at pulling it off and keeping her blouse on. She
scratches her boobs.

CUT TO:

INT. MARY JANE'S HOUSE - KITCHEN - CONTINUOUS

She pours herself a glass of wine. Before drinking, she
sorts her mail in the predetermined trays. She keeps her
fashion magazines.

CUT TO:

INT. MARY JANE'S HOUSE - WATER CLOSET - LATER

We catch a hint of her on the toilet. After a beat, we hear
her phone DIALING, then RING.

INTERCUT WITH:

INT. MARK BRADLEY'S HOUSE - BEDROOM - SAME TIME

We find Mark, brushing his teeth, going over some paperwork
that's spread across his very male, minimalist bachelor vibe
bedroom. He doesn't pick up the phone. It STOPS ringing.

She DIALS again.

He tries not to answer it, but finally does.

MARK BRADLEY

Too late. I'm getting ready for bed.

MARY JANE

Come on, it's only ten-o-five.

MARK BRADLEY

We can try again tomorrow. Good night.

He disconnects. Back to Mary Jane.

MARY JANE

Boooo.

She hangs up, puts her phone down and picks up the book she was supposed to read. After a beat, she sets down the book and trades it for the *Psychology Today* magazine, she stares at the black woman's photo on the cover.

CUT TO:

INT. MARY JANE'S HOUSE - MASTER BATHROOM - LATER THAT NIGHT

Now changed into a worn out men's Duke University T-shirt, she washes her face and brushes her teeth. She stops brushing for a moment, lifts the T-Shirt up to her nose and breathes in deeply. After a beat, she goes back to brushing.

CUT TO:

INT. MARY JANE'S HOUSE - MASTER BEDROOM - MOMENTS LATER

She walks and reads her book, a smile on her face. After a beat she stops and SCREAMS.

We see what she sees -- it's a used condom with a post-it next to it. Close on the note: MISS MARY, ME NOT CLEAN!!!!

CUT TO:

INT. SNC NEWS NETWORK - LIVE SET - NEXT DAY

Mary Jane is mid-show. She is talking about the African women arrested for raping men in order to get their sperm for an abundance ritual. It's a quick peek into who she is on air. She's damn good and very personable. Her take on the story questions if the crime is RAPE or THEFT?

And if it's the latter, she asks her guests, "How do you put a value on sperm?" She gets a few fun comments from her CRIMINAL ANALYSTS.

But her SPECIAL GUEST is a white woman with a memoir coming out that outlines how she made stealing sperm from rich and powerful men a business. A lot was settled privately in exchange for money, homes, cars, furniture, etc. And with some, she secured her future by having their babies. Her stance is that she stole the sperm, she never raped anyone to get it.

(*Note: Any on-air segments will be produced like a news/talk show to give it authenticity.)

During the next break, everyone relaxes for a bit and the Stage Manager rushes up to Mary Jane, who is talking to her Special Guest.

MARY JANE

Way to go, that was great. I love your candor answering my questions. Stay with that, you'll sell more books.

SPECIAL GUEST

Fingers crossed.

STAGE MANAGER

Excuse me Mary Jane. Your brother, Patrick, is here. He said it was important. We're out two minutes, fifty-six --

But Mary Jane is already up and meeting Patrick halfway. She looks panicked.

MARY JANE

What happened?

He's confused for a moment, then:

PATRICK

Oh no, this isn't about Mom, she's fine.

MARY JANE

(on a dime)

Then what are you doing here? I'm working.

PATRICK

I know that, I came to your job.
Look, I just wanted to see if you
could rethink that money situation.

STAGE MANAGER

(calling out)
One minute.

MARY JANE

Really Patrick? You come in here
out the blue, saying its an
emergency...

PATRICK

I said important...

MARY JANE

...have me thinking Mom is dead or
something and all you want to do is
ask me for money?

STAGE MANAGER

Mary Jane.

MARY JANE

(calling out)
I'm coming. I got to go.

She walks back to her desk and situates herself as Patrick
finds his way out of her place of business.

CUT TO:

INT. DR. HUDSON'S OFFICE - EXAMINATION ROOM - LATER THAT DAY

DR. LISA HUDSON, a Spelman girl, who has certainly made good,
is looking at Niecy's baby via a sonogram. She takes some
measurements, types on the keyboard.

DR. HUDSON

(wipes off gel)
She's squished in there. But she
looks good. And you look to be
about thirty-two weeks.

NIECY

That's what the clinic said.

MARY JANE

Thirty-two weeks... as in eight
months?

NIECY

I need to use the bathroom.

DR. HUDSON

Oh good, put half of it in this cup
for me.

Niecy gets up off of the table with the help of Dr. Hudson.
She waddles out with her cup.

DR. HUDSON (CONT'D)

Eight months, and you didn't know
she was pregnant?

MARY JANE

Okay, I thought she was fat. Those
girls eat twenty-four/seven, plus
she was always wearing those big
shirts. Look, what am I going to
do?

DR. HUDSON

You don't have to do anything. You
heard her, she's been getting
prenatal care.

MARY JANE

At a clinic.

DR. HUDSON

It's what she can afford.

MARY JANE

Turn your car around, I see where
this is going.

DR. HUDSON

Of course, she's going to keep on
having these babies, if you keep
taking care of them.

MARY JANE

It's family.

DR. HUDSON

Okay, then baby-sit sometimes.

MARY JANE

I do. And all that leads to is
dreams about me kidnapping them.

They share a smile, then:

MARY JANE (CONT'D)

She and her sister have four kids between them. I do everything right, wait 'til I get to college to have sex, use condoms, get my career, wait to find the husband first. And what do I have to show for being a good girl?

DR. HUDSON

A wonderful career, a beautiful house --

MARY JANE

Seriously, how many kids was I supposed to have by now?

DR. HUDSON

I think you wanted three back-to-back-to-back by thirty-five. And a Jamaican or Haitian nanny.

They share a laugh thinking about the memory.

MARY JANE

You change your mind about wanting any?

DR. HUDSON

No. Oh, by the way, I'm going to Bahia next month, so you need to get in here for your annual before I leave.

MARY JANE

When's the last time you had sex?

DR. HUDSON

Whoa. You reporters.

MARY JANE

Journalist. You want me to start calling you a dentist?

DR. HUDSON

Sorry.

(then)

I've been celibate for four years now.

MARY JANE

I'd like to see David Blaine beat that trick. I don't know how you do it.

DR. HUDSON
You put God first.

MARY JANE
I do.

DR. HUDSON
You don't.

MARY JANE
I don't.
(then)
Save me a seat at church.

DR. HUDSON
Why? Isn't it in your backyard?

MARY JANE
Your mama.
(then)
Let me go check on this girl.

Lisa laughs as her good friend exits.

CUT TO:

INT. MARY JANE'S CAR/DRIVING - A LITTLE LATER

Mary Jane and Niecy ride listening to:

Music Cue: "HE'S ABLE" by Deitrick Haddon

After a beat, Niecy turns it down.

NIECY
Why you trying to make me feel bad?

MARY JANE
What? I thought if anything it
would be inspirational.

NIECY
You wrong, Auntie.

MARY JANE
Niecy, what are you going to do?

NIECY
Get a job.

MARY JANE
Don't you want a life?

NIECY

Can I tell you what I really want?

MARY JANE

Yes, please.

NIECY

To have my baby shower at your house and for you to make your coconut cake, since we just had carrot at Grandma's.

MARY JANE

Are you serious?

NIECY

Yes.

MARY JANE

I don't want to talk about your baby shower. I want to talk about you, your life, your plans, what you're good at.

NIECY

Everybody can't be as beautiful and together as you are.

MARY JANE

No, you don't get to use my success as the reason you can't -- Niecy, you can't let having babies be the biggest achievement in your life.

They both take a beat to think.

NIECY

You know what I'm good at?

Mary Jane turns to Niecy with hope in her eyes.

MARY JANE

What?

NIECY

Sex.

And the hope is gone.

NIECY (CONT'D)

Even thought about the porn industry but Treyvion gave me these damn stretch marks.

(MORE)

NIECY (CONT'D)
(off Mary Jane's look)
What? It's no big deal.

MARY JANE
No, porn is still pretty much a big deal. So much so I didn't even have one of my witty comebacks, I'm so shocked.

NIECY
Kim Kardashian is making millions and she started out in porn.

MARY JANE
I don't think she meant to.

NIECY
Now who's being naive?

MARY JANE
Okay, what about Laurence Fishburne's daughter? Didn't work out so well for her, did it?

NIECY
You talking about that dude's daughter -- the one who beat up Angela Bassett in that movie?

MARY JANE
Yes that "dude." Who happens to be one of our great American actors.

NIECY
Well, that had nothing to do with her being black -- 'cause I know that's what you're getting at -- she didn't get nothing out of it because she's a head case.

MARY JANE
Is this a joke?

NIECY
No. But you want to know what's real funny? Dante got another girl pregnant.
(she's immediately emotional)
Don't say nothing smart, Auntie.
(full on crying)
(MORE)

NIECY (CONT'D)

And because she knows I got his baby too, she made her shower the same day as mine, even though she's only six months pregnant. And I know he's going to go to hers because that's like his real girlfriend... but if I had it at your house, he'll want to come because...

She can't talk anymore she's so upset. Mary Jane pulls over, puts the car in park and turns off the music.

MARY JANE

Niecy --

NIECY

It's not that I love him or nothing, I'm not that stupid. I just don't like how she trying to mess with me.

MARY JANE

Niecy --

NIECY

Auntie, this baby wasn't no mistake.

MARY JANE

That's a double negative.

NIECY

I'm already a mother, so I might as well get my babies out the way. I got Treyvion and now I'll have my pretty little girl who will be half black and Filipino. I got a plan, Auntie. I'm getting my tubes tied after this baby. And when this one get in kindergarten I'm going back to school to be something you want to talk about. So please, can I have my baby shower at your house?

As Mary Jane lets all this sink in, her eyes catch a glimpse of something familiar -- it's her Handsome Black Man's car with Handsome Black Man's Wife driving it. She turns into the Target parking lot. Mary Jane pulls out in traffic and makes a U-turn to follow the car in the parking lot. She finds a park, all the while keeping her eye on the Wife, who heads to the store with her reusable bags.

NIECY (CONT'D)

What are you doing?

MARY JANE

Something more stupid than you getting pregnant again. I'll be right back.

Mary Jane hops out of the car and heads into the store.

CUT TO:

INT. TARGET - MOMENTS LATER

Mary Jane looks down a few aisles, worried she's lost her, until she finally finds the Wife looking at the kitty litter. She walks toward her, then has second thoughts, but it's too late. The Wife has caught her staring. It's awkward. She's pretty and she looks like a nice person, as evidenced by her warm smile. She returns to reading the label, then turns back to Mary Jane.

WIFE

I thought that was you. You're Mary Jane Paul, right?

MARY JANE

Yes.

WIFE

I love your show. Oh my God, that show yesterday. Wow. You go there. Take it to unexpected places.

MARY JANE

Thank you.

WIFE

No, thank you. Now that Oprah isn't on anymore, it gives me something to look forward to in the middle of my day.

MARY JANE

Did you know your husband and I have been sleeping together?

The woman's knees buckle a little.

MARY JANE (CONT'D)

I've been seeing him at least twice a week for a few months now.

The Wife stands there holding the bag of kitty litter, absorbing, thinking.

MARY JANE (CONT'D)

I'm sorry, I'm just tired of him getting away with this. Causing you to live a lie and me to cry. He knows the truth. I know the truth. I thought you should know the truth.

A SHOPPER enters their aisle. The Wife waits for them to pass, then:

WIFE

What was your goal here?

MARY JANE

I wanted you to know the truth.

WIFE

Okay, now that I know, what do you want me to do with that information?

MARY JANE

I don't know. That's for you to figure out.

WIFE

Oh. Okay. Well do you mind helping me figure it out? You thought it was so important for me to know, perhaps you'll find it equally important to help me figure out if I should keep the father of my two children who I'm madly in love with.

MARY JANE

Look, I'm just tired --

WIFE

You're tired? I'm here trying to figure out what kitty litter to buy because my girlfriend found out three days ago that her husband is leaving her for his twenty-eight-year-old assistant. She hasn't eaten, kids don't know why they can't come home and the cat has nowhere else to shit.

(MORE)

WIFE (CONT'D)

So thank you, but I think I'll keep
him and count my blessings your
news wasn't worse.

The Wife goes back to reading the label. Mary Jane stands
there awkward for a minute. Her legs won't move... then just
as she does:

WIFE (CONT'D)

You have any diseases I need to
know about?

MARY JANE

No. We always used condoms.

The two women stare at each other a beat, until the Wife goes
back to shopping for kitty litter. Mary Jane exits the
aisle, some CUSTOMERS start to recognize her. One asks to
take her picture, she obliges. Then a few more FANS line up
for a picture. We watch her pose with her FANS, smiling to
keep from crying. On this, we:

FADE OUT:

END OF ACT THREE

ACT FOUR

FADE IN:

INT. SNC NEWS NETWORK OFFICES - THE NEXT DAY

Mary Jane walks down the row of her Segment Producers, offering morning salutations. Her mission is Kara, who is on the phone making a bikini wax appointment. She hangs up.

MARY JANE

Who are you cleaning it up for?

KARA

John called in a very sincere tone, says he needs to talk. I think he wants to get back together. Maybe not, I don't know. It's just in case. Don't look at me like that. It's been five months.

MARY JANE

I've gone nine months once.

KARA

I did too when I was married. But let's stop talking about it because everyone is staring down my throat.
(then to Producers)
We have a show to produce people.

MARY JANE

Did you see the ratings from yesterday? Pretty good, huh?

KARA

Yeah, we did good numbers.

MARY JANE

Great. Now go get me my Ugly Black Woman story.

KARA

Will you let it go? Nobody cares about that story anymore.

MARY JANE

I do. I have a niece thinking about doing porn.

The two friends/colleagues stare at each other a beat, then Mary Jane turns on her heels and marches away.

KARA

Don't go up there, MJ. Stop.

Mary Jane doesn't. Kara, after a bit of thought, chases her down. She catches her at the:

ELEVATOR BANK

KARA (CONT'D)

I don't get you sometimes. One minute you don't want all the black stories and the next, you want to play the race card.

MARY JANE

I know we joke about race a lot, but this is not one of those ha-ha, he-he moments.

KARA

If you march up there, you're just going to be another emotional, angry black woman fighting for a story that's been dead for seven days.

(then)

This network, you, me -- we can't afford to look like jokes when we're already in fifth place in a race that only has five networks.

(then)

Remember this isn't the end game -- we promised each other *Nightly News*.

The elevator opens... but Mary Jane doesn't get on it.

Music Cue: "MARY JANE" by Alanis Morissette

Mary Jane, defeated, heads back to her office.

CUT TO:

INT. MARY JANE'S HOUSE - KITCHEN - NIGHT

She ices another cake. She is very meticulous with her butter cream icing decoration. She completes her work, admires it, then makes a call -- to Niecy.

MARY JANE

Hey... so I made a cake that feeds around thirty... Thirty, Niecy. That's it. You're welcome.

The ALARM on her cell phone goes off.

MARY JANE (CONT'D)
Gotta go. I love you too.

She hangs up and looks at her phone. The alarm tells her it's "DVR time with Mark." She pours a glass of wine and crosses into her:

TV ROOM

She turns on the TV and after some DVR manipulation, she happily settles into her favorite corner of the sofa. She then dials her phone:

INTERCUT WITH:

INT. MARK BRADLEY'S HOUSE - CONTINUOUS

He is reading when the PHONE RINGS.

MARK BRADLEY
Hello?

MARY JANE
Okay, I'm watching.

MARK BRADLEY
I'm here.

They both lay their phones down. Mark goes back to reading. Mary Jane takes a sip of her wine and starts watching *Vampire Diaries*. After a minute, she excitedly pauses the show and picks up her phone.

MARY JANE
(screaming with delight)
Oh my God!!

Mark smiles, enjoying her reactions. He picks up the phone.

MARK BRADLEY
I told you. Finish watching the opening and call me back. I have to go to the bathroom.

They hang up.

She goes back to watching the show, but somehow fast forwards to the commercials. She's clearly technically challenged. It stops on a sweet commercial from Volkswagen called "The Force." A kid dressed up like Darth Vader is trying to move everything in the house by pure force. Youtube it now.

(<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=R55e-uHQna0>) It's worth it. Mary Jane looks at it intently... sweetly... laughs right when she's supposed to... and then out of nowhere weeps. The kind that makes your body shake. Her phone RINGS. She picks up.

MARK BRADLEY (V.O.) (CONT'D)
It's crazy, right?!!!

MARY JANE
(barely audible)
Can I come over?

Alanis's SONG kicks back in.

CUT TO:

EXT. MARY JANE'S HOUSE - NIGHT

She walks out of the house, right past her car. When she reaches the end of her driveway, she turns on a FLASHLIGHT.

CUT TO:

EXT. MARY JANE'S NEIGHBORHOOD - NIGHT - MOMENTS LATER

We pick her up down the block, about ten houses away from her own, her flashlight leading the way. We can see someone standing in their doorway... It's Mark. When she reaches him, he just holds his arms out to hug her. They embrace for a while before they disappear into his home.

CUT TO:

INT. MARK BRADLEY'S HOUSE - KITCHEN - NIGHT

They are in his kitchen, having wine.

MARY JANE
I just don't get it.

MARK BRADLEY
But you do.

MARY JANE
Of course I do. We know the stories, we report them. And what we miss, Soledad will make into an Emmy winning expose'.

MARK BRADLEY

Your jealousy isn't charming or witty anymore.

MARY JANE

Yeah because now I just want to scratch her eyes out. Skank has a morning show, a memoir, a husband and four kids.

They share a laugh, then:

MARY JANE (CONT'D)

I'm just tired of all the misfires I have with men. I don't want to be a cliché. I want to be the exception to the rule. I'm always the exception to the rule, in every aspect of my life. And I'm just starting to feel like I'm running out of time --

MARK BRADLEY

Finding someone to love you... It's not something you can put on your calendar. That's why it's special.

They lock eyes, cementing this truth. Then:

ERIC (O.S.)

You okay lady?

Mary Jane and Mark turn to see ERIC, Mark's lover of five years, entering.

MARY JANE

Better.

Eric says hello to Mark with a kiss.

ERIC

I picked up wine on the way, if you need more.

MARY JANE

No, I'm going to go.

MARK BRADLEY

You want a ride?

MARY JANE

No. I'll text you.

ERIC

Good night. Farmer's market
Sunday.

MARY JANE

Okay, good night.

Mary Jane picks up her flashlight and exits.

Alanis has more to say... Music swells.

CUT TO:

INT. SNC NEWS NETWORK OFFICES - MARY JANE'S FISHBOWL - LATER
THAT NIGHT

Through the darkness, there's a hint of the office and the
bullpen area.

LIGHT CUE

We can now see that Mary Jane has found her way back to work
in the middle of the night. She settles in behind her desk
to work, as Alanis keeps asking Mary Jane what's the matter.

CUT TO:

INT. SNC NEWS NETWORK OFFICES - BREAK ROOM - LATER THAT NIGHT

Mary Jane, now with her reading glasses on, is waiting for
her popcorn to pop. As she waits, the clock reads: 11:11.
She closes her eyes and makes a wish. It's interrupted by
the BELL of the microwave.

CUT TO:

INT. SNC NEWS NETWORK OFFICES - MARY JANE'S FISHBOWL -
MOMENTS LATER

Back at her desk, we can see that she has been researching
other stories related to women stealing sperm. While
working, she receives a MESSAGE from her FACEBOOK PAGE that
she has a private e-mail from DAVID PAULK. Nerves and
excitement result in a genuine smile. Hesitant at first, she
opens it. It reads: "I've been calling you."

She blushes and e-mails him. She simply types "Hey."

She then clicks on his profile. His picture comes up and
he's a very handsome Black guy. She checks out a few pics.

You can discern he's a corporate type guy, who loves the outdoors, his buddies and gathering around sports related events i.e. Superbowl, and all things Duke. He has a nice smile.

Checking more pictures, she finds one of the two of them happy together. She smiles. Then it shows she has a message.

It reads: "hey... ur up late. Working?"

She types: "Yes." Then erases it and types: "Baking a cake."

He types: "mmmm, miss those."

She types: "I miss you..." But quickly erases it. She then types: "How have you been?" But erases that. She then types: "What happened to us?" But again, erases it and types: "You look happy without me. Are you?" But -- you guessed it -- she erases it.

He types: "dinner?"

She types: "Yes... When?"

He types: "now?"

She types: "uh-oh" then erases it. Then types "okay" and sends it.

FADE OUT.

END OF ACT FOUR

ACT FIVE

FADE IN:

INT. SNC NEWS NETWORK OFFICES - WOMEN'S BATHROOM - LATER THAT NIGHT

Mary Jane takes a ho-bath.

CUT TO:

INT. SNC NEWS NETWORK OFFICES - MARY JANE'S FISHBOWL - A LITTLE LATER

She pulls together an outfit from the clothes and accessories she has stored in her office.

She puts the finishing touches on her quick change outfit. It's not right. She needs heels.

CUT TO:

INT. SNC NEWS NETWORK OFFICES - BULLPEN - MOMENTS LATER

She surreptitiously slides by the CLEANING CREW and dips underneath a desk, clearly occupied by a woman. She finds three pairs of great heels under the desk.

CUT TO:

INT. SNC NEWS NETWORK OFFICES - MARY JANE'S FISHBOWL - A LITTLE LATER

She checks herself again in the full-length mirror, this time with borrowed heels. Now she looks great. She cuts out the lights and then exits.

A beat later, she returns to her office, closes the blinds, takes a seat behind her desk, unzips her jeans a bit and starts masturbating. She fishes blindly in her purse. After a beat, we HEAR a LOW HUM, that drowns out her own, we pan across her desk and find a post-it among many that reads: DON'T KNOCK MASTURBATING! IT'S SEX WITH SOMEBODY I LOVE. -- WOODY ALLEN

CUT TO:

INT. MARY JANE'S CAR/DRIVING - NIGHT

She's driving.

MARY JANE

Call Kara.

AUTOMOBILE VOICE COMMAND (V.O.)

Dialing Kara.

KARA (V.O.)

(half-asleep)

Are you okay?

INTERCUT WITH:

INT. KARA'S HOUSE - BEDROOM - SAME TIME

She's in bed.

MARY JANE

I'm going out to dinner with David.

KARA

It's almost midnight, you know this is a booty call, right?

MARY JANE

(reluctant)

Yes.

KARA

Did you masturbate?

MARY JANE

Twice.

KARA

Good girl. Now you can talk to him with a clear head. And hopefully you won't give him any.

MARY JANE

Did you give John some?

KARA

Turd waits until we're divorced to give the boys a bath and read them a bedtime story.

MARY JANE

Was it that sexy?

KARA

You have no idea how hot it was.
You'll see one day.

MARY JANE

Will I?

KARA

Oh Sad Susie, stop it and be happy
we live in a time where men take
blue pills and women can freeze
their eggs.

MARY JANE

So, you guys getting back together?

KARA

(pause)

No. He wanted to talk tax stuff.
We're taking a bigger hit than we
expected. But you can hear my
problems tomorrow, you have dinner
with David.

MARY JANE

Good night.

CUT TO:

EXT. WAFFLE HOUSE - MIDNIGHT

Mary Jane drives in the parking lot of the Waffle House. She
can see David at a table near the window. She looks at him
for a beat, then:

MARY JANE

Call Never Answer.

AUTOMOBILE VOICE COMMAND (V.O.)

Dialing Never Answer.

She watches him answer his cell phone.

MARY JANE

I don't think there's enough
chicken and waffles I could order
to make this something it isn't.
We're grown, so let's let a booty
call be a booty call and dinner be
some thought, some planning and at
least a days notice.

DAVID
(laughs)
Okay, Mary Jane.

MARY JANE
Good night, David.

She watches him hang up and shake his head and then wave the waitress over to order.

She drives off.

We stay close on her to watch her go from self-assuredness, to loneliness to pride.

Music Cue: "FLY" by Nicki Minaj featuring Rihanna.

Eventually a victorious smile spreads over her face.

CUT TO:

INT. SNC NEWS NETWORK OFFICES - THE NEXT DAY

Music still driving us, Mary Jane heads into work the next day, stepping on the elevator at the same time Kara does. They have their morning salutations, then:

MARY JANE
I want to play the race card.

KARA
(sighs, doesn't agree)
You got it, boss.

MARY JANE
All my ancestors who survived the middle passage just did the cabbage patch.

Kara bursts out laughing. Mary Jane joins her.

CUT TO:

INT. PARENTS' HOUSE - LATER THAT EVENING

Mary Jane takes the TV tray from her mother. Her father, who is keeping her mother company, has a good laugh from watching TV. He then hands his wife the remote.

PAUL SR.
That was pretty good.

HELEN

If you say so.

Mary Jane and her father share a look, while her mother struggles with the remote.

PAUL SR.

Honey, you have to point it --

HELEN

Dammit Paul, I know what I'm doing!

He throws his hands up and walks out.

PAUL SR.

I can only take so much, Helen.

Her mother rolls her eyes and hands Mary Jane the remote.

HELEN

Here. I want to watch *Golden Girls*.

MARY JANE

(changes channel)

Mom, you're going to have to be nicer to Daddy... you may not be dying. And it'd be a shame to get a divorce at such an old age.

(kisses her forehead)

I love you. Good night.

Music kicks back up, as Mary Jane exits, leaving the truth to keep her mother company.

CUT TO:

INT. SNC NEWS NETWORK - LIVE SET - NEXT DAY

As Mark gets up from the desk, he passes Mary Jane. They don't have words today, just winks for each other.

CUT TO:

INT. SNC NEWS NETWORK - LIVE SET - MOMENTS LATER

Mary Jane is at the desk, doing her thing.

MARY JANE

This hour we talk bullies in preschool, break down how China's economy hurts your debit card and we're still talking about women stealing sperm. It's not just Africa. It's in Iowa too. Stay right there and when we come back, it's *Talk Back with Mary Jane Paul*.

CUT TO:

INT. MARY JANE'S HOUSE - DAYS LATER

Mary Jane's house is packed with YOUNG GIRLS and a posse of FILIPINO GUYS. DANTE is the one helping an extremely happy Niecy open gifts.

After a beat, Mary Jane rolls in a black Bugaboo stroller filled with stuffed animals, outfits and other baby needs.

NIECY

Thank you, Auntie!

Niecy jumps up and hugs her Auntie's neck.

NIECY (CONT'D)

(to group)

Everybody give it up for my Auntie!
She hooked me up!

Mary Jane tries to act modest, but she is bursting at the seams to come through for her favorite niece.

CUT TO:

INT. MARY JANE'S HOUSE - KITCHEN - A LITTLE LATER

The Young Folk are crowded in her kitchen having a good time, while she tries to wash dishes. VILMA, her maid, walks up and takes over washing the dishes, never making eye-contact. It's awkward. The following is subtitled.

MARY JANE

(in Espanol)

Vilma, if you're going to work for me, you have to look at me.

VILMA

(in Espanol)

Please, just give me time.

Mary Jane is about to respond but is distracted when she sees, out of her kitchen window, Patrick pull up in his late 80s El Camino. She dries her hands.

CUT TO:

EXT. MARY JANE'S HOUSE - MOMENTS LATER

She walks up to the car, where Patrick is parked. He sees it's her, but chooses to keep his focus on his cell phone where he plays Solitaire.

MARY JANE
You can come in.

PATRICK
I'll wait.

She hands him some money.

MARY JANE
Here.

PATRICK
I'm good.

MARY JANE
Just take it.

Then Niecy breaks through the moment with her excitement.

NIECY (O.S.)
Daddy, look what I got!

Patrick and Mary Jane look up to see Niecy at the front door with the black Bugaboo stroller that Mary Jane gave her.

PATRICK
I don't need it anymore.

The two siblings finally lock eyes. Mary Jane feels bad that she stole Patrick's moment -- because he couldn't give it to his daughter.

MARY JANE
Patrick, I'm --

Patrick gets out of the car and helps his daughter load the stroller into the car.

CUT TO:

INT. BOUTIQUE STORE - LATER THAT EVENING

Mary Jane is trying on some new shoes. She struts back toward Tonya, who smiles back approvingly.

TONYA
You feel better?

MARY JANE
Yeah.

CUT TO:

INT. MARY JANE'S HOUSE - WALK-IN CLOSET - LATER THAT EVENING

Mary Jane is doing her weekly ritual of picking out her wardrobe for the week. There are five hooks on the wall, labeled Monday thru Friday. Monday thru Wednesday is already set with an outfit, accessories and a corresponding shoe. She currently has on Thursday's outfit and is trying on the sexy shoes that will likely go with it, when we hear her DOORBELL. She looks at the clock-- it's 10:27 PM.

CUT TO:

INT. MARY JANE'S HOUSE - HALL - CONTINUOUS

She heads toward her security monitor. It's David. She composes herself, then:

MARY JANE
Who is it?

DAVID
It's me. David.

She opens the front door.

MARY JANE
It's late. Is everything okay?

DAVID
(smiles)
I was wondering if you were up for consensual sex and...
(he holds up chips and dip)
...snacks?

She laughs.

CUT TO:

INT. MARY JANE'S HOUSE - MASTER BEDROOM - LATER

In the wee hours of the morning, Mary Jane slides out of the bed, while David lays there watching her.

MARY JANE
Uhh, brother, a booty call means
you go home.

He laughs.

DAVID
I'm going. I'm going.

She exits into her bathroom.

DAVID (CONT'D)
Hey, what kind of detergent do you
use? I've been trying to find it
since...

He trails off, not wanting to mention a bad memory in this good time.

BATHROOM

We discover her filling a turkey baster of cloudy liquid, then depositing it into a 2 oz travel-size container.

MARY JANE
You won't find it, it's my own mix.

DAVID
Uhh, I can't find the --

MARY JANE
Oh, I took care of it.

DAVID
Cool.

CUT TO:

INT. SNC NEWS NETWORK - LIVE SET - A FEW DAYS AGO

We catch Mary Jane's tail-end of her *Talk Back* segment on collecting men's sperm. There's a simple, everyday WOMAN humbly speaking.

WOMAN
I know it's frowned upon. But I'm
happy I did it. He made me a lot
of promises.

(MORE)

WOMAN (CONT'D)

I hung in there, waited for him to marry me, so we could start our family. You know, the way you're supposed to do it. And although I held on to the hope to be married one day, I was running out of time to have the children I've always wanted.

MARY JANE

So you stole the sperm?

CUT TO:

INT. MARY JANE'S HOUSE - KITCHEN - DAY

From the POV of the interior of the freezer, we see Mary Jane remove her box of baking soda from the freezer.

WOMAN (V.O.)

When we broke up, he took the TV and seven good years of my life. I took the sperm. I see it as finding a way to get something out of the relationship.

We then see Mary Jane place the small container now labeled: D.P. 7/2012 inside of the baking soda box, then put it back in the freezer where it was. As the freezer door closes, we:

CUT TO:

INT. SNC NEWS NETWORK - LIVE SET

MARY JANE

Well, I don't know if stealing semen is an epidemic, but it certainly is a sign of our changing times. And as Deepak Chopra said: "All great changes are preceded by chaos." I'm Mary Jane Paul. Thank you for listening.

On her smile, we:

FADE OUT:

END OF SHOW

*