

The Eve of the Eve of Christmas Eve. (2008)

A house. A living room with a Magnavox, brown couch, a breakfast table (light wood), rocking chair, and radio (unplugged). The walls are a faint yellow. There is a window. Partial curtain covering. Just outside the window six am snow dusts three birdbaths that are clumped together in the backyard. A small kitchen is to the right: stove, kettle, sink and fridge. In the kitchen there is a door that leads to the basement. Past the kitchen, unseen, is the dining room. Now there is only the hum of silence. Now is her time. Marie enters from the kitchen. She plugs in the radio. Patsy Cline's, "I Cried All the Way to the Alter" plays. She gazes out the window. Edmund enters. He is in crumpled khakis and a dirty white tee. He cleans his oversized glasses with his shirt. He lays his hands on her shoulders.

Marie

Lucky hated the snow. But he was a good boy wasn't he.

Edmund

(Distant) Yeah. He was a good dog. (Pause) What are you doing out of bed?

Marie

I'm checking to see if school is cancelled.

Edmund

He can get himself up. He's old enough now.

Marie

Well, there's no use in him getting up if he doesn't have to. He can sleep in this way. Last snow days he'll have are this year. May not be many.

Edmund

Marie. There's barely a dusting.

Marie

You know they cancel for less here. Dustings send them all out for milk. (She straightens the tablecloth) Not like New Hampshire.

Edmund

(Laughing, pulls her in) Not like you can remember now.

Marie

Oh, quit it Edmund. Of course I can. I miss those winters. Bundling up.

Edmund

Oh come off it. We get snow here. We've had some bad ones. Remember—what was it? 95? That blizzard kept us inside for days.

Marie

It's not the same.

Edmund

Once he's through college I'll move you back.

Marie

If we're alive.

Edmund

(laughing) You may send me to the grave--but you've got decades left.

Marie

No. (Pause) I should go feed my birds.

WFLO Announcer (R)

(Thick Southern voice) And due to the inclement weather happenin' all OVER the county. Looks like all schools will be (pause) CLOSED for today.

Edmund

They'll be fine.

Edmund turns off the radio.

Marie

They're cold. Look at them.

Edmund

Don't go out. Let's go back to bed.

Marie sighs. She goes into the kitchen and fills a plastic teal mug with birdseed.

Marie

(From kitchen) I have to grade finals anyway. Should get that done before all the boys get into town.

Marie disappears into the dining room.

Edmund

Grades aren't due for a week.

Marie

(Entering in a jacket) After that there's Christmas cards, people will be getting them after Christmas now as it is. You go back to sleep.

Marie exits. Edmund switches on a light in the kitchen and puts the kettle on.

The screen above:

Super 8mm

Int. Arby's- 11am.

Three women enter. They wear red hats. They are all in their late 50s. Marie is with them. They laugh and approach the counter. The Arby's employee, Shaquilla, sees them approaching and immediately turns her back. She pours three small coffees (room for cream) and brings them up to the counter. Janet is first in line. The Arby's employee rings up the coffee. \$1.09 is displayed.

One o nine.

Shaquilla (S)

One o nine? A dollar nine?

Janet (S)

It went up.

Shaquilla (S)

It went up?

Janet (S)

Marie and Red Hat Woman 2, Barb, begin to giggle.

Janet (S)  
No, no. I refuse to live in a world where a SMALL coffee is over a dollar.

Shaquilla looks both apologetic and confused.

Shaquilla (S)  
I'm, I'm, let me, whell, I don't, I'm real sorry, but...

All three women giggle.

Barb (S)  
We're over 55.

Shaquilla smiles. She pushes a button and 99cents is displayed.

Shaquilla (S)  
99cents.

Janet (S)  
See. Ninety-nine cents I can do.

Janet hands her a dollar. The audio goes out. Marie and Barb receive and pay for their small coffees.

Screen to black.

Edmund exits the kitchen with his Lipton and looks out into the backyard.

Andrew (V)  
And how exactly would you like me to respond? What is it that I could say? That I'm sorry?

Edmund  
Maybe we should send you somewhere for a little while.

Marie enters with snow on her shoulders.

Marie  
Hmm?

Edmund

Maybe we should send you up to your mother's after the holidays—for a couple of days.

Marie

Classes start so early.

Edmund

Right.

Marie starts some coffee for herself.

Edmund

Decaf? (pause) We got snow in Dekalb—didn't we?

Marie

(From kitchen) Ugh. Don't remind me. Illinois was awful.

Edmund

And having Michael there when he was a baby. We barely had food on the table.

Marie

(From kitchen) Your mother sent us all those decorations from Woolworth's that you hand painted. Remember those. I must've spent hours upon hours painting in the angels, and presents, and drummer boys.

Edmund

Well you took that art class years ago. You used to do all those paint by numbers.

Marie

(Entering) Those were for fun. This was to have something to put on our two-foot plastic tree.

The two sit at the breakfast table across from each other. Silently sipping.

On screen:

8mm. Black and white.

Abstract and barely recognizable Christmas lights blink on plastic pine.

Marie

And there was Rosey in Illinois. (waits for response) With the down syndrome. Who was upstairs.

Edmund

(quietly) Yes.

Marie

And she would make Rice Krispie Treats for Michael because she knew how to make them and we didn't have food—

Edmund

There was food.

Marie

And she would come down with a whole platter and that time he got himself on the cover of that Chicago paper because I had to feed him 25cent Dairy Queen cones in the dead of winter instead of buying him toys and they thought it was cute because it was twenty below and his hands were going numb. That was surely a time. And then we moved to Virginia.

Edmund

And you had two more sons—how about that. Well, I guess I should finish my grades.

Edmund carries his Lipton to the dining room.

Bobbie Gentry plays from the wings.

Bobbie Gentry (W)

It was the third of June, another sleepy, dusty Delta day  
I was out choppin' cotton and my brother was balin' hay...

The screen turns from black and white to color. Bright pink and blue bubble lights. Marie drinks her coffee. The music swells. Recedes. Swells. Plateaus.

Bobbie Gentry underscores the screen change.

16mm. Black and White.

Int. Basement. Afternoon.

Two five-year old boys.  
Boy brings a childhood  
Andrew underneath a table.  
The red and white checkered  
tablecloth hangs three-fourths  
of the way to the floor.  
Andrew is very reprehensive  
but allows himself to be  
pulled underneath. The boy  
stares at him and then smiles.

Andrew (S)  
Whatd'cho want?

Boy (S)  
Shh, don't be too loud.

They look at each other.  
Andrew notices the stains on  
his shirt. He looks down at  
his first pair of jeans. He  
can't button the fly by  
himself. He remembers this  
and scratches the floor with  
his dirty fingernails.

Boy (S)  
Take off your pants.

Andrew (S)  
I don't think I should.

Boy (S)  
I'll take off mine. (Pause) But only for a minute. You take off yours first too. You do it.

Andrew (S)  
I don't know.

Boy (S)  
Don't tell your Mom either. I'll be mad at you if you go an' tell your Mom.

Andrew contemplates all  
options and pulls off his

pants.

Wow.  
Boy (S)

Are you taking off yours?  
Andrew (S)

The boy removes his pants  
and quickly pulls them up.

See? Good enough.  
Boy (S)

I can't button m'pants. (Begins to panic) Help me button 'em.  
Andrew (S)

You can't put your pants on? Don't you tell your Mom, Andrew!  
Boy (S)

Andrew begins to cry.

Mom! MOM!  
Andrew (S)

He leaves from under the table. The boy shakes his head. He becomes worried and waits for his name to be called. For someone to return. He picks up a doll that has been passively watching this whole time and pulls up her dress. The music fades. The screen becomes a blue hue. The color of morning rising.

Screen to black.

Marie sips her coffee. She sneaks into the kitchen and comes out with two cookies.

Marie  
Andrew? Is that you down there? Did you make it home already?



The curtain falls. It rises halfway to show Marie dipping her cookie in her coffee. The curtain falls.

NIGHT:

The curtain rises. Andrew and Keith stand in the living room with snow on their shoulders and luggage in their hands. Only the kitchen light is on. They place their bags down.

Keith  
Are they here?

Andrew  
They're probably in bed.

Keith lies on the couch.

Keith  
Get over here, Andrew.

Andrew lies next to him.

Keith  
Second Christmas with your parents.

Andrew  
We could've gone to Seattle.

Keith  
I don't know which evil is worse—yours or mine.

Andrew  
It's a coin toss. They mean well.

Keith  
I know. Just don't let your father polish my boots again. And try to keep your mother from sneaking in and collecting our dirty laundry.

Andrew  
I know, I know. I'll tell them again. They just—they mean well.

Keith  
Oh, god. Is Michael here yet?

Andrew  
May be.

Keith  
Stone cold.

Andrew  
Maybe we can con him into actually looking at you this trip.

Keith  
If this snow can make it Hell and freeze it over. Until then.

Andrew  
He's probably making two hundred grand a year now.

Keith  
Better give us something good for Christmas.

Andrew  
A house would be nice.

Keith  
For real.

Joseph descends the stairs.  
Keith leaps up embarrassed.

Joseph  
Hey.

Andrew  
Hey, Joseph!

Andrew goes to him. There  
is an awkward hug. Keith  
shakes his hand.

Keith  
Merry Christmas.

Joseph  
Yeah. Merry Christmas. Mom and Dad are asleep.

Keith  
Noticed the snow.

Joseph  
Yep.

Joseph goes into the kitchen  
and returns with a glass of  
Coke.

Joseph  
There's stuff in the freezer. They told me to tell you—there's beer.

Andrew goes to the kitchen.

Andrew  
Want one?

Keith  
Yeah.

Andrew  
(From kitchen) Anything on television?

Joseph  
Sure.

Joseph turns on the  
Magnavox.

Keith  
Christmas specials! Gotta love your parent's cable.

Andrew returns with two  
beers.

Andrew  
Thank God for TNT.

The Charlie Brown  
Christmas Special plays on  
the Magnavox.

The music (“O Christmas Tree”) comes from the wings.  
The three sit peacefully.

Edmund (V)

(Voice from dining room) Have you read Pontuso’s book? I loaned it to you years ago. You should read it. Havel has some great ideas. You know Pontuso is still trying to get him over here. He was in D.C. Andrew? He was in D.C. back when you were first in California. Do you remember that? He was writing up there for a while. Pontuso’s book went over well. He did much better with Rowen and Littlefield than I did.

Andrew

Are you writing another one?

Joseph

Huh?

Andrew

Writing another story? Have you been doing much writing?

Joseph

Nah. SCAD just wanted stills for the design program.

Keith

I’m jealous. I almost wish I had gone there. But you’re doing more graphic design instead of animation?

Joseph

Yeah. Or—I don’t know maybe both or game design, or a mix.

Keith

You look a little flushed.

Andrew

Still coming down from the plane.

Joseph

How was it?

Andrew

Hell.

The audio crosses from Magnavox to wings. Linus attempts to explain what Christmas is all about.

On screen:

Flash Animation.

Static.

Edmund (V)

I think things are turning around. Slowly. People are still apprehensive but there is a lot more money going back into the education. Well, public of course. I'll be surprised if this college hangs on for another ten years. (Pause.) Private colleges just can't live up to what the state schools can offer now a days can they? Been that way for a while. Huh?

Andrew

Yeah.

Keith

Humph?

Andrew

I agree with Linus. (pause) When's Michael getting into town?

Joseph

Dunno.

The stage lights dim. The three sit and watch the screen bringing food to lip. The outside of the window is illuminated. The snow brilliantly glistens white and blues hitting the pane without making a sound. Dylan's "Queen Jane Approximately" comes from the wings. The animated static on the screen becomes dated newsreel (Super 8mm) from the early 60s. New York City in the snow. Women and men with big hats and large bags.

Joseph, Andrew, and Keith do not react: the action is continuous monotony. The music fades, the image fades, the snow fades, the lights go

up. Marie and Edmund enter.

Marie  
Oh, you made it. You must be EX-hausted.

Andrew  
Flying. Flying is terrible. I swear it's unnatural.

Edmund  
Pfft.

Hugs exchanged.

Marie  
Well, fill us in.

Edmund  
They probably just want to get to bed.

Keith  
No, no, we're good.

Edmund  
Well, how are you?

Keith  
Good. Good.

Edmund picks up Keith's bag.

Keith  
Oh, that's okay I can get it—really.

Edmund  
Sure? I was just going to bring it up.

Andrew  
That's fine Dad. We're just going to take the bed in the basement.

Pause.

Edmund  
Sure. (pause) It's just cold down there. Keith might like to stay in Michael's room.

Andrew  
Isn't he getting in tonight?

Edmund  
Not 'til Christmas Eve.

Marie  
Oh, Edmund. Let them stay in the basement.

Edmund  
Of course they can stay in the basement, I'm just saying it's going to be cold that's all.

Keith  
It's okay. Wherever.

Andrew  
The basement will be fine. Thanks. You shouldn't have gotten up—you need your sleep.

Edmund  
Your mother and I aren't that old--still got some years left in us.

Marie  
Did you get some wine? Let me tell you, it's just been frigid here. Well, look at that. It's still snowing.

Edmund  
Just for you Marie. Someone heard your call.

Marie  
Oh, come off it. Sit down. Sit. Sit. We got pizza earlier. Just to have for your arrival. How were the airports?

Keith  
Awful.

Marie  
Janet was flying the other day up to Maine--she had to be here for Christmas--in the OB--she couldn't get off work. Guess a lot of babies come out around Christmas. Boy, she said it took her two hours to get through the airport. She is a card--let me tell you. Everyday at Arby's she's giving those employees hell.

Edmund  
Marie.

Marie  
Well, she does. Just teases them and, well, I think they're getting a little tired of us. Did

you want this heated up? I'm sure you would you don't want it cold do you?

Keith

Either way.

Andrew

Cold's fine.

Edmund

Heat it up. Heat it up. So your little brother will be off to college soon. How about that?

Andrew

I know. Seems just like yesterday.

Edmund

Remember that Marie? Having Joseph?

Marie

Umm.

Andrew

You got up and spent an hour putting on your make-up and making sure you had a nice dress. I remember watching from my bedroom. Dad was panicking. And running all around, "Marie we should go. He'll be here any minute." You just put on your lipstick.

Marie

I opened up the good wine. Well, it's only six dollars a bottle. But six dollars is six dollars.

Andrew

(playfully to Joseph) You were only, like, six pounds.

Edmund

He was a little bit more than six pounds. Weren't you?

Joseph

Yeah.

Andrew

So SCAD?

Joseph

Yup.

Edmund

All the way to Georgia.



Georgia.

Marie

Good program.

Keith

Yeah. Good program.

Joseph

Marie enters with two glasses of wine. She hands one to Edmund.

Well, here's to your safe arrival.

Edmund

Glasses raised. No one bothers to stand.

Erik Satie's "Gnossienes No. 1" begins to play from the wings.

The curtain closes.

BLACKOUT.

The Eve of Christmas Eve.

The curtain opens. The window is illuminated. It is daylight. An extremely faint snow continues.

The radio is on.

WFLO Announcer (R)

And here we are AGAIN. I know all you kids are waiting. Well—I HAVE the word. Your Christmas break has been EXTENDED because...SCHOOLS are...CLOSED for today. Have a very merry Christmas Eve tomorrow. May God be with you in this glorious time.

Andrew and Keith enter from out of the kitchen with toast. They sit at the breakfast table. They are grinning and carry a jovial tone.

Keith

Well, I think I'm even more exhausted this morning.

Andrew

Shush.

Keith

Do you think anyone heard us last night?

Andrew

Nah. Should I make coffee?

Keith

Don't they only have decaf?

Andrew

They've got some in the freezer that they keep around for us. Screw it. We can just get some downtown.

Keith

Perfect. When you freeze coffee it gets all dried out anyway. And if it's been there indefinitely—

Andrew

Anyway. Will just get some at Zelia's.

I'm going to take a shower.

Keith

They kiss.

Your breath stinks.

Keith

Go take a shower.

Andrew

(as he exits) Don't let your mother get her hands on my laundry.

Keith

I'll guard it with my life.

Andrew

Andrew sits at the table staring out. The window is illuminated. The snow picks up.

On Screen:

Super 8mm.

Int. Arby's- 11am.

Three women enter. They wear red hats. They laugh and approach the counter. There is a different employee behind the counter. He smiles to himself as they enter. Janet approaches.

Let's not beat around the bush—you know why we're here.

Janet (S)

(sucks on his lip) All out.

Ralph (S)

All out? Come on now. (looks to his name placard) Ralph. Ralph, we expect a little consideration. We've been 'round the block ten times 'fore you had your first tooth.

Janet (S)

Ralph (S)

(grins) Alright. I'll give it to you straight. That coffee has been sitting there for an hour. I was 'bout to brew some fresh. Didn't know how close it was to eleven.

Janet (S)

Well, Ralph we'll let you off the hook this time. We ARE going to wait. We could go somewhere else but that would be inconsiderate to all of us. We'll be right over there--when it's done.

Ralph (S)

I'll even bring it out.

Janet (S)

That would be fabu----lous. Just don't forget about us—that's all we ask.

All three women giggle. The boy smiles to himself. The screen lifts with his grin still hanging on.

Edmund enters.

Edmund

You know what you two need—steady incomes.

Andrew

Merry Christmas to you too.

Edmund

I think it would be great—what you brought up on the phone. You need a house. You need a new car. You need careers.

Andrew

I know. (pause) You weren't even done with your PhD.

Edmund

Maybe you should think about editing. I think Lane has some connections in DC. Isn't that what Jenny Wallace did for a while?

Andrew

It would just be nice to have a kid. Other people end up with them everyday.

Edmund

Other people who aren't two hundred and fifty thousand dollars in debt. I should get you back in touch with Lane anyway.

Andrew

Sure.

Edmund

You're going to help your Mom with the cooking?

Andrew

Tomorrow. We're going out for a bit. Do you think the roads are too bad?

Edmund

Supposed to be stopping soon.

The lights dim.

LATE AFTERNOON:

The screen falls. On it are images of the Hudson Valley. Peter Hutton's exploration of the Hudson (through Spring, Summer, Fall, Winter – fragments of each film play).

Edmund pulls out a deck of cards and places them on the breakfast table. Keith enters from the basement. Marie enters from above. The men sit and play Gin Rummy as Peter Hutton's films reel on. Marie polishes the handrails. The first spotlight falls on her.

Marie

I wanted to have plants. I mean--I want to know how plants work. I seem to constantly over water, Lucky. I get Poinsettias every Christmas and they are dead by New Year's. Sometimes I put them in the sun. I—well, I don't think that works. So I put them in the window. Of the kitchen. And he tells me let it be! And my mother calls and all goes wrong and then the sun comes up and somewhere in the back of the yard you're only two feet underground and when the next hurricane comes—and it will come—and when the next hurricane comes. Excuse me.

The screen turns to black.

16mm. Black and white.

Images of Edie Sedgwick appear: flashes of a woman in long boots and black. She timidly smiles for the camera. She pulls her hair to the side. Marie dusts quietly humming Bobbie Gentry to herself.

Marie  
Lucky will be exposed. Won't you. Oh, Lucky.

The light goes out. The screen goes up. The curtain goes down

Bobbie Gentry cuts in.

Bobbie Gentry (W)  
And at dinner time we stopped and walked back to the house to eat  
And Mama hollered out the back door y'all remember to wipe your feet...

The curtain rises.

NIGHT:

Edmund (V)  
NO! I told you it was Miss White.

Keith (V)  
(laughing) I had Miss White!

Joseph (V)  
Dad. Come on!

Andrew (V)  
(laughing) I *know* Keith showed you the card.

The screen lowers over a dimly lit breakfast table.

Super 8. Black and white.

Ext. Porch. New Hampshire.  
1972.

Marie stands as a young woman. Giggling she turns away from the camera. She mimics the movements of Edie Sedgwick. She wears black and has on long boots.

Sound from the wings:

Edmund (W)

We should get you to the hospital. Our baby is on the way.

Screen:

Marie poses for the camera. She pouts her lips and turns away embarrassed.

Edmund (S)

So it WAS Miss Scarlet.

Edmund (W)

You went into labor over an hour ago. We need to run you into Manchester.

Screen:

Marie frowns. She picks up a purse.

Andrew (V)

(laughing) Mom knew. Mom TOTALLY knew. She had the game down all along.

Screen:

Marie smiles briefly and her lips move: "I knew."

Edmund (W)

Our first born. How about this. HOW about THIS. You need a blanket?

Screen:

The image flickers. Marie stares out. She is completely unapologetic. She moves out of frame. She turns for one last smile.

BLACKOUT.

Christmas Eve.

From the wings:

“Words...I keep saying ‘words’  
Milo and I really mean it. I’m trying  
to get you to say ‘God is Words’....  
It’s *still* all words, ain’t it?”  
--Kerouac

The curtain rises on Andrew.  
He is by the breakfast table  
staring out the window.  
Keith enters from the  
basement. They look out.  
They embrace. Nuzzle heads  
and laugh Moment.  
Moment. Moment. Keith  
turns on the record player.  
Cat Power’s, “Kingsport  
Town,” casts a lullaby over  
the scene. There is a knock  
on the door. Elizabeth  
Sedgwick comes in.

Knock. KNOCK!

Elizabeth

Holy—

Andrew

Hey, Elizabeth!

Keith

Hugs, laughter, rampant  
impulse of screeches,  
“hellos,” “miss you” and the  
like. Elizabeth carries the  
Sedgwick air—a similar nose  
at least. As the three laugh,  
the screen descends. The  
three gather around the  
breakfast table. Silent stories  
of past and present are  
recounted.



On the screen:

Hi 8.

A young Andrew (16) sits with a girl, Jenny, on the edge of a Baptist graveyard. The brick wall has caved in. A scratched blue Camero is in the background.

I--I don't think it was your fault. Andrew (S)

Jenny smiles. She puts his hand in hers.

I like you too. Jenny (S)

Andrew (16) smiles at her.

Come off it Elizabeth. Andrew

Remember. No, no ReMEMber. You know. Elizabeth

Even I know. Come on, Andrew. Keith

I think it's covered by insurance. Jenny (S)

No—tell me again. Where were we? Andrew

That bathroom. Elizabeth

Coffee--- Keith

Coffee Messiah! Elizabeth

Andrew  
Of course! The quarter and the disco ball!

Keith  
So funny.

Elizabeth  
Seattle.

Andrew  
Seattle.

Keith  
Shit I miss Seattle.

On the Screen:

Andrew removes his hand. He picks up a brick and places it where the wall has fallen in.

The curtain falls on the laughter. It rises on mid-morning. Marie holds a coffee cup from Arby's. She stares out at her birdbaths. Edmund enters. He places a hand on her shoulder. She sips--barely. As though there is nothing in the cup: perhaps too hot.

Edmund  
The boys are out.

Marie  
Snow's still going.

Edmund  
Still going.

Marie  
Lucky would have hated this. He would have wanted to do his business and run right in.

Edmund

Michael should be in soon.

Marie

I hope I-95 isn't a mess. Has he called?

Edmund

He'll be fine.

Marie

There's almost two inches out.

Edmund

Marie. There's almost a foot.

Marie

I don't think so. That's not a foot. It's wet. It's a mix. Not like New Hampshire.

Edmund goes to put the kettle  
on.

Edmund

It's almost eleven. Should we wake him?

Marie

No. Let him sleep. It's Christmas Eve. Let him sleep. This may be his last Christmas home.

Edmund

Marie.

Marie

Do you think Elizabeth will be here for lunch? I could do an egg salad.

Edmund

I'm sure she'll be home for Christmas Eve. She just wanted to say hello.

Marie

Hello?

Edmund

Yuletide greetings. And all.

Marie

Well, Michael will certainly be here. I'm sure he'll be starving and he can pack it away anyway so,

Marie sips off of her coffee cup.

Edmund

Arby's doesn't close for Christmas Eve?

Marie

(brightens) No. Please. Let me tell you. Janet was a card this morning. She had us all in stitches.

Edmund

(disengaged) Did she?

Marie

She propositioned the young guy.

Edmund

Marie.

Marie

It was so funny. You should have seen him blush.

Edmund sighs. Marie laughs to herself.

Marie

Oh, she was just joking that's all. She's just joking and having a good time—that's all.

Marie turns on the stereo.  
Bobbie Gentry plays:

Bobbie Gentry (R)

And then she said I got some news this mornin' from Choctaw Ridge  
Today Billy Joe MacAllister jumped off the Tallahatchie Bridge...

Marie giggles to herself.

Marie

(slightly off step with the music) "Today Billy Joe MacAllister jumped off the Tallahatchie Bridge..."

Marie stands silently looking out back. Edmund goes into the kitchen.

On the Screen:

Flash Animation. Black and White.

A stick-person puppet rendition of the nativity. From the wings Yo La Tengo's "Speeding Motorcycle" plays. The three Wise Men enter on motorcycles. The Angel of the Lord is black and blue. Mary holds Jesus. Jesus walks away and joins the star. Mary is startled. Joseph builds the moon and puts Mary on it. She becomes a nun, he an executive for Time Warner. She never rides in his plane. An ocean comes and Jesus turns it to pieces of paper that make a bed on which the sheep and camels can birth red Cameros. Mary dumps bleach from the moon, the Camero becomes the color of bruised fingernails. She closes her eyes.

Edmund comes up to Marie and kisses her on the forehead. She sips her coffee.

Marie  
I'm going to warm this up in the microwave.

The screen goes black. Marie and Edmund exit into the kitchen. The music fades. The screen ignites.

Int. Kitchen. 2004

Tivoli, New York.

Mini. DV. Andrew is on the floor next to the door. Keith hovers.

Keith (S)

Don't you ever threaten that! You're fine. Just breathe.

Andrew (S)

I lost my job. My hair's falling out, there are little holes next to this fucking door and I can't get the fucking insects to stay outside and this caulk—this caulk is ridiculous.

Keith (S)

Screw the insects.

Keith goes to embrace Andrew.

Andrew (S)

Don't touch me!

Keith (S)

(hurt) Fine! Fine. I won't. I won't even look at you.

Andrew (S)

No. Please. Tell me something.

Keith (S)

They're just coming in because it's winter.

The screen flickers. The image spins.

Andrew and Keith in bed. They hold each other. The sun comes up. A spider looks in.

The screen goes to black.

Andrew, Keith, and Elizabeth enter the living room.

Andrew

Keith and I are going to run downstairs and wrap it quickly.

Elizabeth  
You really didn't have to get me anything.

Andrew  
Shh.

Andrew and Keith exit into the kitchen. Marie comes downstairs. No image. No sound from the wings. The daylight in the window, as well as the snow, persists.

Elizabeth  
Merry Christmas Mrs. Roy.

Marie  
Oh, hello. Merry Christmas.

Elizabeth  
Cold out.

Marie  
Yes. (nervous laughter) It is. Is it still snowing?

Elizabeth  
Yeah. I think my Dad said it's supposed to get up to a foot and a half by tomorrow. White Christmas.

Marie  
Well, I hope the roads are plowed. How were the roads in town? Michael's coming in today.

Elizabeth  
Oh, they're fine. We didn't have any trouble getting around town.

Marie  
Well—that's good.

Marie takes out a can of Windex and begins cleaning the window.

Marie  
Are you waiting on Andrew and Keith?

Elizabeth  
They just ran downstairs to grab something.

Marie  
You all aren't going back out?

Elizabeth  
Oh, no. I gotta get home.

Pause.

Elizabeth  
How was your semester?

Marie  
Fine. They're long. Oup, getting longer--still short though. Fly by once they're over. But fine. How are your parents? I haven't seen them in a while. Well, I guess I bumped into your Mom in Food Lion last month.

Elizabeth  
Oh, that's right. She mentioned it on the phone.

Marie  
She said you're still in—New York?

Elizabeth  
Yep. Finished up at Columbia, you know, and, just decided to stay.

Marie  
You're doing some teaching?

Elizabeth  
Yeah. Teaching and a research position.

Marie  
What was your Master's—

Elizabeth  
Public Health.

Marie  
That's right. That's right. I remember your mother telling me that a bunch of times now. Well. It looks only like a sprinkle out there.

Elizabeth



Adds up.

Andrew and Keith emerge from the kitchen with a present. Marie turns the radio up. From the wings: Joni Mitchell's "River."

Ta-da.

Keith

Elizabeth squeals. Marie turns and offers a small grin.

Should I open it now?

Elizabeth

Nope. Open it tomorrow and then give us a call.

Andrew

Will do. Well. Merry Christmas.

Elizabeth

She hugs Andrew and Keith.

Goodbye, Mrs. Roy.

Elizabeth

Oh, yes. (as if on the phone) B-bye.

Marie

We'll walk you out.

Andrew

All three leave. The song continues. Marie continues to clean. She straightens the breakfast table. She wipes down the wood. She hums along to the song. Joseph comes into the living room. He watches his mother for a moment before going into the kitchen. The song plays out.

Marie

There's cereal.

Joseph

I know.

Marie

And eggs.

Joseph

Yeah.

Marie

Michael should be here soon. I hope the roads aren't too bad.

Joseph

Look fine.

Marie

There's also toast and I could make you a tuna melt if you'd like that.

Joseph

Nah. I'll have cereal. Oops. There's no milk.

Marie

Oh, that's right. Your Dad's in town doing the shopping for today and tomorrow. Pfft. I told him that there was no way I was going into Wal-Mart on Christmas Eve. No way. He wanted me to go but I said, no, I've still got so much cleaning to do before Michael gets into town. I'm sure it's swamped at Wal-Mart. But, you never know, this snow may be keeping people home. You could wait on breakfast—he may be home soon. But, knowing the lines, who knows? I hope he watches himself on the roads—wouldn't that just be exactly what we need on Christmas. Oh, Lord.

Joseph

I'll just have an Eggo.

Marie

You sure?

Joseph

Yeah, I don't mind.

Marie

Your brother and Keith were just walking Elizabeth out to the car. I wonder if they just went right back into the basement from outside.

Joseph

Don't know.

Joseph  
Yeah. I think I hear the television on down there.

Marie  
Well, I suppose I should start the pies.

Joseph listens.

On the Screen:

Black and white static. From the wings: recognizable, but not specific, television noise/programming. Joseph takes his Eggo and goes to the couch. He turns on the Magnavox: images of the Grinch (Seuss'). Joseph sits quietly chewing his Eggo. His mother turns off the radio and wanders into the kitchen.

Joseph sits. The sound quiets. The screen (above) fades from static to one of Keith's films.

16mm. Black and White

Ext. Hudson Valley.  
Afternoon. December 2002.

Three feet of snow covered by a layer of ice. Andrew in a long black dress, wig, and black shawl. Black heels. Andrew runs across the ice. The heels break through. He falls, laughs, adjusts his wig. Smiles. Breaking ice. Afternoon sun.

The light beyond the window darkens slightly. The snow

continues.

LATER EVE:

The screen is black. The living room lights are dim. From the dining room unseen colored Christmas lights blink, reflecting off the television and the window. Outside the snow picks up. Marie enters. She looks out the window. Edmund enters.

Edmund  
The boys wiped out from cooking?

Marie  
The birds are cold tonight.

Edmund  
I'm sure they found a warm place to go.

Marie  
Did he call back?

Edmund  
I guess the roads are bad so he's taking it really slow so as to not go off.

Marie  
He shouldn't risk it. He should just stay in a motel along the way and come in when the roads are cleared.

Edmund  
You know how stubborn Michael is. I'm sure he's put off by the fact that he will be getting in so late on Christmas Eve anyway.

Marie  
No use risking anything. What is he going to miss anyway?

Edmund  
He wants to be here for Christmas morning.

Marie  
Andrew's missed Christmas before. Things happen. He shouldn't be so concerned about doing the same thing every year. We had to stay in DeKalb. You remember the two foot

tall tree and the hand-painted ornaments.

Edmund  
Oh, Marie. You'd be so upset if he wasn't here.

Marie  
Well if the roads aren't safe.

Edmund  
Do you think we should attempt Midnight Mass?

Marie  
I'm not getting behind the wheel with you. On this ice?

Edmund laughing holds her  
from behind.

Edmund  
Am I that bad?

Marie  
Horrible. You're practically blind.

Edmund  
Joseph's really happy to have them here. They've been hiding in the basement.

Marie  
Well, I should call up to New Hampshire. My mother must be having a fit at my sister's house with all those dogs and cats and kids—drives her batty.

Edmund  
Don't you want to call them on Christmas?

Marie  
I can call them tomorrow too.

Edmund  
And who's paying for this long distance?

Marie  
Please. We may not be able to afford to vacation in Paris but we can afford a couple of long distance calls—especially around the holidays.

Marie picks up the phone.  
She speaks quietly. Every  
few minutes she lets out a

loud laugh. Edmund turns on the television. The Weather Channel plays. He picks up the stockings that sit next to the fireplace and hangs them—with care.

On the screen:

Int. Roy's former house – 1992.

Marie is bundling up. Andrew(11) has Joseph(2) in his stroller. He is putting a blanket on top.

Marie (S)

I don't think the stroller will make it—it's icy out. We should just carry him.

Andrew (S)

I feel too sick.

Marie (S)

I'll carry him. What do you want from Burger King?

Andrew (S)

Egg and Cheese croissant.

Marie (S)

Me too. Well let's get going so your father doesn't get home and stop us.

Andrew (S)

Are you sure you've got him?

Marie (S)

Yeah.

Marie picks Joseph up. The two together are a sight. Coats, hats, mitten, scarves. Their bodies meshing into one being of fabric and fluff.

Marie (S)

Get the door.

Umm –hum.

Andrew (S)

Ext. House. Front Landing.  
Three small brick stairs –  
Continuous.

Marie carries Joseph. She covers her eyes from the icy precipitation. Andrew is right behind her. He is about to close the door as Marie steps onto the first brick stair. She catapults into the air. Both legs going out. She lands with a crack still clutching onto Joseph.

Moment.

Joseph wails.

Marie rolls over.

Marie (S)

I'm okay. I'm—Andrew get your brother. Andrew. Get your brother. Help.

Andrew retrieves Joseph and brings him inside. Marie crawls through the door.

Marie (S)

Oh God Andrew. Call your father.

Andrew begins to scream

Andrew (S)

Momma! Momma! 911? 911!

Marie (S)

Andrew. Oh, god. Call your fath—

Marie passes out. The screen door ricochets back and forth

off of her limp body. Joseph wails.

Andrew grabs the phone.

Daddy! Daddy! We need you!  
Andrew (S)

The screen goes out.

Andrew enters from the basement.

Dad? Dad?  
Andrew

How are you boys doing?  
Edmund

Fine. Keith and Joseph are talking. Thought I'd check to see if Michael called.  
Andrew

Roads are still bad.  
Edmund

As the two hang stockings and light candles

Andrew's voice from the wings, Edmund's from the dining room. 2006.

Have you read Pontuso's book?  
Edmund (V)

I'm pretty busy right now.  
Andrew (W)

Well, whenever you get a chance. Have you heard about the protests out there?  
Edmund (V)

Andrew (V)



Things have been rough—haven't been keeping up with the news.

Edmund (V)

You haven't been into LA?

The Screen illuminates.

Hi 8.

Int. Baptist Church - 1998.

Jenny and Andrew in black laughing. Pierced. Combat boots. Disregard. Tape player and Christ on the cross.

Faintly Sinead O'Connor's "Daddy I'm Fine" begins to play.

Andrew (V)

No.

Edmund (V)

Well, there are all these protests about the recent legislation dealing with immigration. Do you have many illegal immigrants in Santa Clarita?

Andrew (V)

I actually have no idea. I don't really find it polite to ask strangers if they're legal or not.

Edmund (V)

Ambassador Jones is up at arms. His family's from Southern California you know. And he's upset because of the black community being pushed out of jobs. He's really upset about New Orleans—you know about New Orleans?

Andrew (V)

Dad—no.

Edmund (V)

Jones is worried about the displaced black community there. He's afraid they don't have the money to go home. And the Mexicans are coming in as the labor to rebuild. He just gave a lecture on this—Are you still there?

Andrew (V)

Yeah, the reception goes out now and again.

Edmund (V)

Well—Jones' is worried.

Andrew (V)

I'm here. How are you doing?

Edmund (V)

We're good, we're good. So the blacks weren't major players in the construction business. So they aren't rebuilding the city. Plus the Mexicans are working for cheap—someone's making a pretty penny off of this one. It's a complicated mess. Isn't it? But Jones'—he's up in arms. Something to think about. How are things out there?

Andrew (V)

Good. Fine. It's warm.

Edmund (V)

That's Southern California for you. Missing the East?

Andrew (V)

Suppose so.

Edmund (V)

Well, I've got a hot bath waiting. You take care. Send Keith regards.

Andrew (V)

I will Dad.

The Screen fades.

“Daddy I'm Fine” swells and abruptly ends.

The snow outside the window illuminates.

Snow falls on the Weather Channel.

Snow on the screen.

From the wings, Bobbie Gentry.

Edmund

We could string some lights on the mantel.

Andrew

Do you think he's okay?

Edmund

I'm sure he'll be calling any minute. If not, well, I guess we'll have to call the State troopers.

Andrew

Dad. Come on.

Andrew pours brandy.

Edmund

Pour me one.

Marie's conversation on the phone has turned solemn. She hangs up and wanders into the dining room. Edmund follows. The ice in his glass clicks. Andrew pulls out a string of lights and places them across the mantel.

On the screen:

Int. November 1990.  
Hospital Room.

Marie is in bed. Edmund and Andrew enter.

Edmund (S)

How are you feeling?

Marie (S)

I had them bring in the hospital McNuggets.

Edmund (S)

Are you hungry?

Andrew (S)

Is he here?

Edmund (S)

He's probably—

Marie (S)

I had them bring in one of those green aprons for Andrew—to hold him.

Edmund (S)

I don't know.

Marie (S)

Oh, it's fine. It's fine.

She presses a buzzer. Janet enters.

Janet (S)

We were waiting.

She holds a premature Joseph. He is six pounds and barely opens his eyes. Janet exits.

Andrew holds him with care. The window darkens.

Edmund makes his way to Marie's bed.

Edmund (S)

How do you feel?

Marie (S)

I can't eat anything. It taste terrible. Look at your little brother. He made it.

Andrew (S)

He's yawning.

Edmund (S)

He's tired. Just like the rest of us. Michael's so upset he couldn't be here.

Marie (S)

Oh, well. He'll be here soon for Christmas. Nothing will change before then.

Joseph yawns.  
Edmund tries to feed Marie  
some green Jell-O. She  
refuses to open her mouth.  
The screen fades.

Bobbie Gentry (W)

And Papa said to Mama as he passed around the blackeyed peas  
"Well, Billy Joe never had a lick of sense, pass the biscuits, please"...

Andrew

Well, Lucky. Looks like you're missing all the excitement.

Andrew plugs in the white  
lights. They sit for a minute  
and then begin to blink.  
Andrew sips his brandy. He  
looks at it and tosses it back.

Lights everywhere fall.

Bobbie Gentry continues to  
play as the white lights from  
the living room and the  
colored lights from the dining  
room illuminate the window.  
The snow dances in techni-  
color.

Marie enters with a glass of  
wine. She is dizzy. She does  
not turn on the lights. She  
turns on the radio.

WFLO Announcer (R)

Well, looks like we are in for a very RARE Christmas here in the heart of Virginia. The SNOW keeps on a coming. Hope all you are nuzzled and cuddled and getting ready to dream of SUGAR plums. (laughs) Needless to say a winter watch advisory is in effect through all of Prince Edward County. So grab your loved one's and get on close to that fire.

The announcer cuts out. An  
ad for the Annual New  
Year's Bash at the Armory  
comes on. Marie turns down  
the volume and sits.

On Screen:

16mm. Color.

Close-up on Marie. She holds Lucky in cradled in one arm. He squirms and fights, trying to lick her face. With her other hand she applies lipstick. Lucky knocks into it and it smears.

Edmund's voice from the dining room:

Edmund (V)

You can't just give up because one contest rejected your screenplay. Talk to Andrew. He can help you edit. I'll help you. Oh, Marie. You give up so easily. You never want to send anything out. What do you think will happen? You've got to send it out for anyone to know you're here.

Marie

Oh, Lucky.

On Screen:

Lucky licks away the newly applied lipstick. Marie laughs and puts him down. She stares at the lipstick that is covering half of her face.

Edmund (V)

Here give me a copy. I'll send it off. Come on Marie. I've got some time before the Knights meeting.

On Screen:

Marie wipes off the lipstick.

Screen fades.

Marie

It's mine.

Marie stands and picks up the phone. The sound of an empty dial tone fills the wings and every room. Marie stands concentrating on the noise before wandering off. She wanders into the kitchen and puts two more ice cubes in her wine.

Christmas lights.

Edmund enters into the living room. Keith comes up from the basement into the kitchen. Each turn on a light.

Keith

Oh, hello Mr. Roy.

Edmund

You can call me...how is Andrew? Joseph still down there?

Keith

Andrew is calling Jenny to see if she's heard anything at the dispatch office.

Edmund pours himself more brandy.

Edmund

Brandy?

Keith

Sure.

Edmund gets out a juice glass and pours half a cup.

Keith

That's good. Unusual weather?

Edmund

Oh, well. We get this some. Not usually this early. Or ever on Christmas.

Keith

I'm sure. (pause) His phones probably just out.

Edmund

So what do you and Andrew think you'll be doing now? I mean—come summer?

Keith

Well, we're taking it one step at a time.

Edmund

That seems wise. But you know you'll have to get on top of this. You can't be out in the streets up to your ears in loans. We would help you but, you know, we try.

Keith

Thank you for the little help here and there but I really don't want to talk about...

Edmund

Well, no one does. And your father—he's like us?

Keith

(awkward laugh) Maybe worse.

Edmund

Darn it all. Would you look at that snow. Marie would have been so happy.

Keith

Brandy's good.

Edmund

Blackberry. From Philadelphia. Only get it around Christmas. One Christmas I stuffed Andrew's stocking with it. We never have hard liquor. You know this stuff is a steal it's only like five dollars a bottle.

Keith

You're kidding.

Edmund

No. Really. Not bad. Huh? Of course Michael turns his nose up at it. (chuckles) Called it bum liquor when Andrew pulled it out of the stocking. Andrew and I don't mind it though. What do you think?

Keith

It's great. I think we're going to be fine. Come Spring.

Edmund

What? (pause) Oh. Well. I suppose I should call the highway department. Jesus. Merry Christmas.



Edmund and Keith avert eyes, standing with brandy.

Edmund

Well, get some sleep if you can. (laughs) Santa comes tonight.

Edmund leaves. Keith puts the brandy down and gets a beer. He finds Christmas cookies and eats. He turns on the Magnavox. He flips through stopping on *What Ever Happened to Baby Jane*.

On the Screen:

Int. Car. Highway. North Dakota. Summer 1998. Daybreak.

Andrew drives. Keith is asleep. Tom Waits "Ole 55" plays. Andrew mouths along with a cigarette bouncing up and down with intonations. Keith wakes up.

Keith (S)

It's morning.

Andrew (S)

"I'm riding with lady luck."

Keith (S)

How's it going? Do you want me to take over soon?

Andrew (S)

We'll take turns. But I'm great for now. Go back to sleep.

Keith (S)

I'll be here whenever you want to switch.

Andrew (S)

I know.

The sky turns from pink dark blue to pink. The horizon fades and turns to black. Andrew comes up from the basement.

No word. Andrew

No word? Come here. Keith

I can't fucking get over this. Where's my Mom? Andrew

I think they're upstairs. Keith

What should we do? Andrew

There's nothing we can do. Just wait. Keith

Well we've got to do something. Andrew

Marie enters in a coat. Joseph comes up from the basement. He leans against the counter and watches. Edmund follows Marie.

Get back here. What do you think you're doing? Edmund

I'm going out after him. Maybe I'll drive up around Richmond. I'll check the ditches. Marie

Look at the roads. Marie I'm not letting you out there. This is ridiculous, you'll get yourself killed. Edmund

Don't you touch me! Marie

Edmund  
Marie.

Andrew  
Mom. You want me to go out?

Edmund  
You're not going anywhere.

Keith  
Andrew--sit down.

Andrew  
I'll go, Mom. You're not getting on those roads—you'll kill yourself.

Marie  
Well I'm going while you all sit here and stare at the walls.

Edmund  
We've called—

Marie  
I can't believe this. He was supposed to be in twelve hours ago. Out of my way.

Keith  
Andrew.

Andrew  
Mom, get over here.

Andrew touches his mother's  
shoulder.

Marie  
Don't you touch me! Don't you touch me after you got to leave and I cut coupons and  
shopped double coupons and you left you didn't even come home when Lucky died and  
you stand there and you make excuses and you have your chance and all I have is three  
dollar wine and television and an adjunct teaching position that pays less than the f'ing  
janitors and DON'T YOU TOUCH ME! (pause) I'm going to find my son.

Marie's face is contorted.  
The tears have turned her  
mascara into charcoal rivers  
that part her cheeks. She  
goes out the door and slams  
it. Edmund puts on slippers

quickly and hurries out.  
Keith goes to Andrew.

Andrew  
Can you rub my back? Can you touch my shoulders?

Keith  
Of course.

Joseph does not cry. He goes  
to the freezer.

Joseph  
Does anyone want a frozen pizza?

Keith chuckles. Andrew  
smiles.

On screen:

Super 8mm. Black and  
White.

Int. Arby's 11am.

Marie enters. The other Red  
Hat women do not  
accompany her. She does not  
wear her red hat. She meekly  
approaches the counter. The  
Arby's employee offers a  
systematic half-nod. No  
recognition.

Ralph  
May I take your order?

Marie looks shaken.

Marie  
Uh, well, yes. I guess I'll take a small coffee.

He punches it in. \$1.09 is  
displayed. He turns around  
to get the coffee. With his  
back turned:

Room for cream? Ralph

Hmm? Marie

Room for CREAm? Ralph

Yes. Yes, please. Marie

Marie digs into her purse. She darts her eyes around the empty establishment. When she realizes the coast is clear, she pulls out her red hat. She awkwardly places it on her head. Ralph turns around. He smiles.

Oh, I thought it was you. Ralph

Yes! Yes it is me. Marie

All alone today? Ralph

I think so. Marie

Ralph punches a button. 99cents is displayed. Marie smiles and hands him a dollar.

Oh, and keep the change. (she giggles) Marie

Ralph smiles.

Oh, well. (jockingly) Thanks a lot. Ralph

Marie wanders to a booth and blows on her coffee. The screen fades.

BLACKOUT.

The Christmas lights blink. The sky outside the window is turning from black to dark blue. Edmund is on the phone. Joseph sits on the floor. Andrew and Keith hold each other on the couch. The snow has calmed. The radio faintly plays The McGuire Sisters “Sincerely.” The screen is empty. The wings are silent.

Edmund

(on phone) Still nothing, Jenny? Well, let us know if you hear anything. Oh, I have something else I’d like to report. (pause) Yeah, (half-chuckle) it’s been a busy night. A few hours ago we had a little wreck just outside our driveway. (pause) Yes. No. It was one of ours. (pause) We just need a tow at some point. Had the van go into a ditch. (pause) No. No.

Marie walks down the stairs in a trance. She is in a red velvet nightgown. The ice cubes clink in her glass of wine.

Edmund

We’re all fine. (pause) Please yes. It’s a Jeep Cherokee. (pause) Oh, of course—you know. Well Merry Christmas and come by soon. (pause) Yup. Andrew and Keith made it fine—they’ll be waiting to see you. (pause) I’m sure it will be fine. B-bye.

Edmund hangs up.

Edmund

I’m sure we’ll hear soon.

Edmund puts his hand on Marie’s shoulder.

Edmund

I'm going to go upstairs and lay down for a minute. I'll keep the news on.

Marie

You could put the presents out in a bit.

Edmund

Yes. I'll put the presents out in a bit.

Edmund looks to Andrew and Keith. They move slightly apart.

Edmund

You two get some sleep. I hooked a heater up for you in the basement.

Andrew

Night Dad.

Keith

Merry Christmas.

Edmund exits.

Joseph

If anyone wants breakfast soon. I'll cook today.

Joseph wanders into the dining room. He comes out with a puzzle and puts it in front of Marie.

Joseph

I didn't have time to wrap it.

Marie kisses Joseph on the forehead. He exits.

Keith

Well. I think I'll try to nod off for a bit as well.

Keith kisses Andrew on the forehead.

Keith

You know where to find me.

I love you. Andrew

Love you too. Goodnight, Mrs. Roy. Keith

Marie stands and hugs Keith.  
She begins to cry  
uncontrollably.

I'm sorry for all of this. Marie

Please. I'm sure everything will be just fine. Keith

Well. Marie

Come find me soon. Keith

I will. Andrew

Keith exits.

Paul Simon's "The Only  
Living Boy in New York"  
begins to play on the radio.  
Andrew turns it up. He looks  
at his mother and sits.

On the Screen:

Int. Breakfast table. Some  
years earlier. Marie and  
Andrew are slightly younger.  
They hunch over the table  
working on a puzzle. Their  
mouths move.

From the wings:  
Their conversation.



On stage:  
The same movements.  
Different puzzle. Same  
words.

Marie begins to sing along to  
the song.

Marie (V)

Oh, the nuns used to play this all the time at Notre Dame.

Andrew (V)

Hip nuns.

Marie (V)

They were. They had their moments.

Andrew (V)

I can't find any blues.

Marie (V)

Oh, I put all the sky pieces over there.

Andrew (V)

Is this ocean or sky?

Marie (V)

Definitely sky?

Andrew (V)

Have you heard from Janet recently?

Marie (V)

Oh, have I heard from Janet! Let me tell you—she is a card.

Andrew (V)

How's the hospital?

Marie (V)

Oh, she looks terrible. They have her working the longest shifts. Her eyes look terrible. And her knees are just going and she's been having all these heart problems. Let me tell you we are not as young as we used to be.

Andrew (V)

Nah. You're all still young.

Marie (V)

(chortles) Please.

Andrew (V)

And Grammy?

Marie (V)

Well, I'm going to have to be up there soon. Your father doesn't want me to go but she just keeps calling and calling. It's her cataracts. She can't drive worth a darn. She barely passed her driving test—I can't believe they gave her that license.

Andrew (V)

Ah, well, Rita's got some years.

Marie (V)

Please—she'll probably out live all of us. Hanging on.

Andrew (V)

Sky?

Marie (V)

Definitely ocean. And I think it goes right here.

Andrew (V)

Well, maybe we should continue this in the morning.

Marie (V)

Yes. I think the birds are coming out anyway. Wouldn't want them to miss their Christmas seed. I bought some special for them. Don't tell your father. He's always having a fit about my animals. I even bought a little wreath for Lucky. I just thought. Well, he's such a good boy.

The screen goes out.

The voices from the wings go out.

The song ends.

Andrew

Yes. He is. Isn't he?

Andrew gets up. He pours himself a little more brandy. He sips it. Looks down and tosses it back.

Andrew

I'm sure we'll hear soon.

Marie

Would you look at that. Snow filled up all the birdbaths. I'm just gonna have to sweep them out I guess.

Marie puts on her coat and retrieves birdseed and a broom. She exits out back. Andrew watches her go. Bobbie Gentry's "Ode to Billy Joe" comes on. Andrew goes downstairs. The basement door shuts.

Marie passes the birdbaths. She disappears to Lucky's grave.

The front door opens. Michael enters. He is covered in snow. He carries luggage and presents.

Michael

Mom! Dad! Jesus. (brushes snow away) I'm home.

Bobbie Gentry

And now Mama doesn't seem to wanna do much of anything  
And me, I spend a lot of time pickin' flowers up on Choctaw Ridge  
And drop them into the muddy water off the Tallahatchie Bridge.

On the screen:

Hand Drawn Animation.

By Joseph Roy

Mary as a nun on the moon. She giggles and sits on a porch swing. She crosses her legs. She wear long black boots. She looks at the camera. Poses. Laughs. She

takes out some lipstick.  
Winks. She applies the  
lipstick. It sticks.

Lights out.

End.