

THE FRACTURED VEIL

Screenplay Adaptation

Written by Michael Davies

INT. MARY'S LIVING ROOM – EARLY MORNING

Dim light seeps through dusty curtains.

MARY (40s), tired and withdrawn, sits alone on a worn sofa. In her hands: an old, crumpled photograph.

She traces the edges with her finger.

INSERT – PHOTO

Mary and JOHN stand smiling outside a small yellow house. On the porch: a pale wooden CRIB.

Mary's thumb brushes the crib.

Her eyes lift.

Across the room, on the mantle, TWO CHILDREN'S DRAWINGS in mismatched frames:

“MUMMY, EMILY AND DANIEL.”

Mary stares.

MARY

(softly)

I should've thrown it all away...

She exhales.

MARY (CONT'D)

No. They need to stay.

She places the photo face-down on the coffee table and rises stiffly.

INT. KITCHEN – MOMENTS LATER

Mary checks the clock.

7:30 A.M.

She forces brightness into her voice.

MARY

Breakfast time. Emily, Daniel, up! You'll be late for school!

Silence.

Mary cracks eggs into a pan. They SIZZLE.

Two plates. Two glasses of milk already waiting on the small table.

MARY

Daniel... don't forget your tablet today.

She hums an old tune.

Peers out the window.

Grey clouds hang low.

MARY

Emily!

No answer.

Her grip tightens on the spatula.

MARY

(whispered)

They'll come down.

She plates the eggs. Steps back.

The table feels wrong. Empty.

MARY

Don't make me eat alone again.

INT. KITCHEN – LATER

Mary washes dishes.

Two FULL glasses of milk remain untouched.

MARY

They'll eat lunch.

A glass slips from her hands and SHATTERS in the sink.

Mary freezes.

MARY

(low, bitter)

Why wasn't I enough?

She cleans the shards with trembling hands.

Images of John laughing with someone else flash in her mind.

MARY

It doesn't matter. I have Emily and Daniel.

She presses her palms to the counter.

INT. LIVING ROOM – DAY

Mary sits alone.

Clock TICKING.

She watches mothers outside through a narrow gap in the curtains — children laughing.

MARY

They don't deserve it.

Whispers begin. Faint. Persistent.

Mary clamps her hands over her ears.

MARY

Stop.

The whispers continue.

INT. DINING ROOM – NIGHT

Single candlelight.

Empty chairs.

Mary studies the photo again. The crib glows softly in flame-light.

MARY

Tomorrow will be better.

She blows out the candle.

Darkness.

INT. CHILDREN'S BEDROOM – MORNING

Mary stands in the doorway.

Two perfectly made beds. Toys organized. Books aligned.

She surveys it like a drill sergeant.

MARY

Daniel, Emily, time to wake up!

Nothing.

She steps inside.

MARY

Daniel. Up. Now.

She glances at Emily's bed.

MARY

Don't make me come back.

She exits.

INT. KITCHEN – MOMENTS LATER

Breakfast laid out: eggs, toast, milk.

Mary waits.

Calls upstairs.

MARY

Daniel, Emily!

She leans against the counter, tapping impatiently.

Still nothing.

She walks to the stairs.

MARY

If I come up there—

No response.

Mary returns to the table.

Two empty chairs.

Daniel's booster cushion.

Emily's pink chair with unicorn stickers.

MARY

(softening)

Please don't make me eat alone.

She eats a few bites, then stops.

MARY

No snacks later.

INT. LIVING ROOM – DAY

Mary vacuums invisible crumbs.

Straightens frames.

She pauses at the children's drawings.

Smiles.

MARY

Daniel, math. Emily, finish your colouring.

The whispers return.

MARY

Don't start with me today.

She yanks the curtains open.

Street empty.

She scrubs a spotless table aggressively.

WHISPERS grow louder.

MARY

Stop!

Sudden silence.

Mary stands breathing hard.

Everything is perfectly in place.

INT. CHILDREN'S BEDROOM – AFTERNOON

Mary smooths Daniel's comforter.

MARY

Make your bed properly next time.

She fixes Emily's quilt.

MARY

And keep your crayons tidy.

She steps back.

Satisfied.

INT. DINING ROOM – EVENING

Mary sits with folded hands.

No plates now.

MARY

I love you both so much.

Her eyes glisten.

MARY

Tomorrow will be better. I promise.

The room darkens.

Mary stares at empty space.

INT. CHILDREN'S BEDROOM – AFTERNOON

Mary smooths the bedsheets again. Everything is already perfect.

She props EMILY'S STUFFED BEAR against the pillow.

MARY

(soft, soothing)

There. Now everything's ready.

She pulls the door halfway closed.

INT. HALLWAY – CONTINUOUS

Dim light filters through drawn curtains.

Mary pauses, listening.

Only the faint CREAK of floorboards.

MARY

It's too quiet.

She heads downstairs.

INT. KITCHEN – AFTERNOON

Mary scrubs breakfast plates harder than necessary.

Water RUNS loudly.

She glances out the window.

The overgrown garden.

The rusted swing set.

MARY

Emily's too old for it now anyway.

Her own voice echoes back.

She dries her hands.

Then—

A faint HUM.

Barely audible.

Mary freezes.

WHISPERS begin. Indistinct. Layered.

Her breathing quickens.

MARY

Not again.

The voices grow sharper.

Mocking.

Accusing.

Mary drops the towel.

Presses her hands over her ears.

MARY

Stop it.

The whispers intensify.

Mary stumbles into—

INT. LIVING ROOM – CONTINUOUS

She collapses onto the couch.

Eyes squeezed shut.

MARY

Leave me alone!

Suddenly—

Silence.

Mary sits frozen, chest heaving.

Slowly lowers her hands.

MARY

It's just my imagination.

She forces herself upright.

MARY

They need me to keep it together.

INT. LIVING ROOM – LATE AFTERNOON

Mary cleans obsessively.

Counters.

Rugs.

Mantle ornaments.

Television remains OFF.

She hums to herself.

The sun begins to dip.

She checks the clock.

Nearly dinner.

INT. UPSTAIRS HALLWAY – EVENING

Warm orange light spills through a small window.

Mary pauses outside the children's room.

MARY

Emily? Daniel?

No answer.

She opens the door.

INT. CHILDREN'S BEDROOM – CONTINUOUS

Perfectly still.

Mary sits on Daniel's bed.

Smooths the comforter.

MARY

I don't know what I'd do without you.

She picks up a small PLASTIC DINOSAUR.

Turns it over in her hands.

MARY

You'll always stay with me, won't you?

A FLOORBOARD CREAKS behind her.

Mary spins.

Nothing.

Her grip tightens on the toy.

WHISPERS return.

Soft.

Elusive.

Then—

“Mummy...”

Mary stiffens.

MARY

Who’s there?

Nothing.

She snaps on the light.

The room floods bright.

Empty.

MARY

(low, venomous)

Get out. This is my house. My family.

She breathes hard.

MARY

I won’t let anyone hurt my children.

She switches off the light.

Leaves.

INT. KITCHEN – NIGHT

Mary chops vegetables.

Mechanical.

Precise.

Jaw clenched.

The whispers fade.

Her thoughts race.

MARY (V.O.)

They're trying to take them. Everyone is.

She grips the knife tighter.

MARY (V.O.)

I'll protect Emily and Daniel.

She continues preparing dinner.

Cold.

Determined.

INT. KITCHEN – MORNING

Weak sunlight filters through closed curtains.

Mary sits at the table, hands wrapped tightly around a mug of tea.

She stares into it.

Clock on the wall: nearly 9:00 A.M.

MARY

Emily, Daniel, come down for breakfast!

No response.

She rises.

INT. STAIRCASE / HALLWAY – CONTINUOUS

Mary cups her hands.

MARY

You don't want to be late for your lessons!

Nothing.

She exhales, forces calm.

MARY

Fine.

INT. CHILDREN'S BEDROOM – MOMENTS LATER

Mary opens the door.

The room is immaculate.

She steps inside.

MARY

(playful)

Emily, you didn't leave your crayons out again, did you?

She moves to Emily's desk.

Picks up a DRAWING: Mary holding hands with Emily and Daniel beneath a bright sun.

Mary presses it to her chest.

MARY

You're so talented.

She smooths Daniel's comforter.

MARY

Your maths book is still downstairs.

She pulls the curtain slightly open.

Dust motes drift in sunlight.

MARY

Breakfast is waiting.

She exits.

INT. KITCHEN – LATER

Two plates arranged perfectly.

Eggs. Toast triangles. Jam for Emily.

Two glasses of milk.

Mary sits, hands folded.

Waits.

MARY

Breakfast is ready!

Silence.

Her smile fades.

MARY

Your food's getting cold.

She stands, lifts the plates, places them in the oven.

MARY

They'll eat when they're hungry.

INT. LIVING ROOM – MIDDAY

Mary vacuums.

Scrubs counters.

Moves ornaments.

She checks the clock.

Almost noon.

INT. CHILDREN'S BEDROOM – CONTINUOUS

Mary enters.

Daniel's maths book remains closed.

MARY

Daniel, you haven't even started.

She taps the workbook sharply.

Moves to Emily's desk.

Places crayons and paper.

MARY

Draw something for me.

She stands in the centre of the room.

The silence presses in.

MARY

I'll be downstairs.

She leaves.

INT. KITCHEN – LUNCHTIME

Peanut butter sandwiches.

Apple slices.

Crackers.

Mary waits.

MARY

It's time for lunch.

Nothing.

Her chair SCRAPES loudly as she stands.

MARY

(shouting)

I work so hard for you!

Her anger drains.

She sinks back down.

MARY

I'm sorry.

She buries her face in her hands.

MARY

I love you. I just want what's best.

INT. LIVING ROOM – AFTERNOON

Mary folds laundry.

Dusts shelves.

Organises cupboards.

Her movements are automatic.

Her mind elsewhere.

INT. LIVING ROOM WINDOW – DUSK

Mary stares out.

A neighbour's porch light glows.

MARY

I'll do anything to protect you.

Her jaw tightens.

MARY

Anything.

INT. LIVING ROOM – AFTERNOON

Mary sits rigid on the couch, clutching the remote.

Television HUMS softly.

She flips channels.

Stops on a daytime news segment.

A smiling ANCHOR.

MARY

Of course you're smiling.

The screen cuts to a REPORTER in a park.

Text appears:

LOCAL MOTHER'S CHARITY EVENT BRINGS COMMUNITY TOGETHER

Camera pans to JEMMA THEAKER holding a toddler.

Jemma laughs. The child giggles.

Caption: JEMMA THEAKER – EVENT ORGANISER.

Mary leans forward.

Her grip tightens.

Jemma speaks warmly about family and community.

MARY

Must be nice.

Mary turns the volume down.

Switches the TV off.

Throws the remote aside.

She stands abruptly.

Paces.

MARY

What does she have that I don't?

She pulls back the curtain.

Across the street, a mother loads groceries while children play.

Mary lets the curtain fall.

MARY

They don't know what it's like.

INT. KITCHEN – CONTINUOUS

Mary yanks open a drawer.

Slams a NOTEPAD onto the counter.

Begins writing furiously.

INSERT – LIST:

1. Jemma Theaker — too perfect. Charity event.
2. Woman across the street — smug.
3. Park mothers — whispering.

She underlines JEMMA twice.

MARY

Jemma.

She stares at the name.

MARY

They need to understand.

INT. DINING ROOM – EVENING

Two untouched plates.

Mary sits.

MARY

Dinner's ready.

Empty chairs.

MARY

Don't you want to eat with me?

Her eyes fill.

MARY

You're all I have.

INT. LIVING ROOM – NIGHT

Darkness.

Curtains closed.

Whispers rise.

MARY

Stop it.

VOICES (V.O.)

She thinks she's better than you.

Mary clamps her ears.

VOICES (V.O.)

She has everything you wanted.

MARY

Shut up!

Silence.

Mary breathes hard.

MARY

She doesn't deserve it.

INT. BEDROOM – LATE NIGHT

Mary lies staring at the ceiling.

Jemma's smiling face haunts her thoughts.

MARY

She doesn't deserve it.

Her fists clench.

MARY

She's going to understand.

A faint smile creeps across her lips.

For the first time in days, Mary feels purpose.

INT. KITCHEN – NIGHT

Dim overhead light.

Mary sits at the table staring at her folded list.

JEMMA THEAKER is underlined twice.

MARY

I'll bet she's never had to struggle.

She rips the page from the pad, folds it, slips it into her coat pocket.

She stands.

Grabs her coat.

EXT. RESIDENTIAL STREET – NIGHT

Mary drives slowly.

Streetlights streak across the windscreen.

She passes the park.

Empty swings sway.

She turns onto a quieter road lined with immaculate homes.

Her jaw tightens.

Then—

Jemma's house.

Two-storey brick. Wraparound porch. Warm lights.

Mary parks several houses away.

Engine off.

She sinks low in her seat.

INT. MARY'S CAR – CONTINUOUS

She watches.

Living room silhouettes behind curtains.

Jemma and her husband close together.

Mary's fists clench.

MARY

They don't deserve it.

Upstairs light still on.

Mary imagines Jemma tucking in her child.

Her chest aches.

Nearly an hour passes.

The upstairs light finally goes out.

Mary starts the car.

INT. MARY'S HOUSE – LATE NIGHT

Mary enters quietly.

Hangs her coat.

Removes shoes.

She climbs upstairs.

INT. CHILDREN'S BEDROOM – NIGHT

Nightlight glows.

Two neat beds.

Mary steps inside.

MARY

(whispered)

Mummy's home.

She sits on Daniel's bed.

Smooths the comforter.

MARY

I missed you.

She picks up Emily's stuffed bear.

Cradles it.

MARY

You don't deserve to be hurt.

Tears soak into the bear.

MARY

They'll understand.

INT. KITCHEN – NEXT DAY

Mary writes obsessively.

Her list grows.

Jemma remains circled.

MARY

She's the worst.

A child's VOICE echoes in her mind.

DANIEL (V.O.)

Why do you care about her?

Mary freezes.

MARY

She thinks she's better than us.

EMILY (V.O.)

You're better, Mummy.

Mary smiles faintly.

MARY

We're a family.

EXT. JEMMA'S HOUSE – EVENING

Mary watches from her car again.

Jemma exits with her child.

Husband joins them.

They walk together.

Mary grips the wheel.

MARY

They don't deserve this.

Mary waits.

Then steps out of her car.

Approaches the porch.

Peers through the curtain gap.

A framed FAMILY PHOTO inside.

MARY

This isn't over.

INT. MARY'S LIVING ROOM – DAY (RAINING)

Rain taps against windows.

Mary sits in an armchair staring outside.

Her grip tightens on the armrests.

MARY

You promised.

Her thoughts drift—

FLASHBACK – INT. KITCHEN – DAY

John sits across from Mary.

Coffee in hand.

JOHN

This isn't working, Mary.

MARY

What are you saying?

JOHN

Maybe we need other options.

MARY

Give up?

JOHN

We can't keep doing this.

MARY

It's destroying you.

JOHN

I can't do this anymore.

Mary stares.

World tilts.

FLASHBACK – INT. LIVING ROOM – NIGHT

John comes home late.

Smells of alcohol.

MARY

Where were you?

JOHN

Out.

MARY

With who?

JOHN

I needed a break.

MARY

From me?

JOHN

We stopped being together.

MARY

You don't mean that.

John walks away.

FLASHBACK – INT. FRONT DOOR – DAY

John stands with suitcase.

JOHN

I'm sorry.

Mary clings to him.

He pulls away.

Door closes.

BACK TO PRESENT – INT. LIVING ROOM

Rain intensifies.

Mary stands.

Moves to the mantle.

Children's drawings.

“MUMMY, EMILY, DANIEL.”

She traces them.

MARY

They're real.

Her jaw tightens.

Thoughts turn dark.

Jemma's smiling face intrudes.

MARY

She doesn't know what it's like.

Her reflection stares back from the window.

Hollow-eyed.

MARY

They'll all see.

She doesn't blink.

INT. MARY'S LIVING ROOM – NIGHT

Mary stands at the window.

Streetlights bathe the road in orange.

Her breathing is slow. Controlled.

MARY

She doesn't deserve it.

She pictures Jemma's smile.

Her fists clench.

Upstairs —

Emily and Daniel sleep.

Mary kisses them goodnight, tucking the bear under Emily's arm.

MARY

I'll be back soon.

She grabs her coat.

Checks her pocket.

The folded list.

JEMMA underlined.

EXT. RESIDENTIAL STREET – NIGHT

Mary drives.

Rain residue glistens on asphalt.

She parks several houses down from Jemma's.

Kills the engine.

Watches.

Curtains drawn.

TV flickers behind fabric.

Her hand trembles on the door handle.

She exhales.

Steps out.

EXT. JEMMA'S HOUSE – CONTINUOUS

Mary slips around the back.

Picks up a small SPADE.

Pry.

The latch gives.

She enters.

INT. JEMMA'S KITCHEN – NIGHT

Spotless.

Silent.

Mary moves upstairs.

Each step deliberate.

INT. MASTER BEDROOM – NIGHT

JEMMA sleeps beside her husband.

Mary enters.

Pulls out a KNIFE.

Jemma stirs.

Eyes open.

Mary clamps a hand over Jemma's mouth —

SLASH.

Jemma's throat opens.

Blood spills across white sheets.

The husband jolts awake.

MARY

(low, venomous)

Stay down.

He scrambles back, hands raised.

Mary looks down at Jemma's lifeless body.

No triumph.

Only emptiness.

She runs.

EXT. BACK GARDEN – NIGHT

Mary flees.

Disappears into darkness.

INT. MARY'S HOUSE – NIGHT

Mary stumbles inside.

Locks the door.

Her hands are bloodstained.

Her coat splattered.

She climbs upstairs.

INT. CHILDREN'S BEDROOM – NIGHT

Nightlight glows.

Two neat beds.

MARY

I'm home.

She collapses onto Emily's bed.

Grabs the stuffed bear.

Presses it to her chest.

MARY

(sobbing)

I did it for you.

Silence.

Mary doesn't feel alone.

INT. KITCHEN – EARLY MORNING

Mary sits at the table.

Cold tea in her hands.

Clock ticks.

Almost 7:00 A.M.

She sets the mug down.

Hands shaking.

MARY

It's a new day.

She wipes her palms on her skirt.

Her coat — blood-stained — is shoved deep in the closet.

She stands.

INT. LIVING ROOM – MORNING

TV NEWS plays softly.

A PHOTO OF JEMMA fills the screen.

REPORTER (V.O.)

Local mother Jemma Theaker was found—

MARY

She's gone.

Mary sways.

The weight of it crashes over her.

MARY

I did this.

Her breathing becomes shallow.

The whispers creep back.

VOICES (V.O.)

You're doing the right thing.

Mary paces.

Stops at the window.

Her reflection stares back.

Wild eyes.

Dishevelled hair.

MARY

I don't know if I can do this.

Silence.

INT. CHILDREN'S BEDROOM – NIGHT

Mary opens the door slowly.

Two perfect beds.

She steps inside.

Her shoulders relax.

A small comfort settles over her.

She watches them sleep.

MARY

(soft)

Mummy's here.

INT. KITCHEN – MORNING

Weak sunlight bleeds through thin curtains.

Mary stands at the sink, scrubbing the same plate over and over.

Her reflection stares back from the glass — hollow eyes.

She stops.

Breathes.

The WHISPERS begin, faint.

VOICE (V.O.)

They know.

MARY

(quiet)

No, they don't.

Her grip tightens on the plate.

VOICE (V.O.)

They're talking about you.

Mary SLAMS the plate into the rack.

Water splashes.

MARY

You're not real.

Silence.

She checks the clock.

8:30 A.M.

INT. DINING AREA – MOMENTS LATER

Breakfast laid out perfectly.

Scrambled eggs. Toast. Milk.

Two places set.

MARY

Emily. Daniel. Breakfast.

Nothing.

She waits.

Her jaw tightens.

MARY

Come down, please.

Silence presses in.

She sits alone.

INT. LIVING ROOM – LATER

Mary folds laundry with mechanical precision.

Her hands move, but her eyes are distant.

Her phone BUZZES.

She freezes.

Checks it.

CALLER ID: THOMAS.

She hesitates.

Answers.

MARY

Hello?

THOMAS (V.O.)

I was wondering if you'd like to grab coffee again. Just to talk.

Mary glances upstairs.

The whispers stir.

VOICES (V.O.)

He'll see the cracks.

MARY

(shaky)

I... I have a lot going on.

THOMAS (V.O.)

I understand. Just know I'm here.

She ends the call.

Places the phone down slowly.

Her chest tightens.

INT. LIVING ROOM – NIGHT

Lights off.

Mary sits in darkness.

Hands over ears.

VOICES (V.O.)

You're losing control.

VOICES (V.O.)

They'll take everything.

MARY

I won't let that happen.

Tears stream down her face.

MARY

I'll protect them. No matter what.

The whispers fade — but don't disappear.

Mary stares into nothing.

INT. LIVING ROOM – AFTERNOON

Golden sunlight pours through the window.

Children laugh somewhere in the distance outside.

Mary sits on the edge of the couch, staring out.

Her hands clench.

VOICES (V.O.)

They're laughing at you.

MARY

They don't know anything.

VOICES (V.O.)

They're just like her.

Jemma's face flashes through Mary's mind.

Her jaw tightens.

She stands abruptly.

MARY

I need to get out of here.

INT. MARY'S HALLWAY – CONTINUOUS

Mary grabs her coat.

The faint metallic scent of blood still clings to it.

She slips it on.

Locks the door behind her.

EXT. RESIDENTIAL STREET – DAY

Mary walks quickly.

Curtains flutter as neighbours peek out.

Mary feels every stare.

VOICES (V.O.)

They know.

Her pace quickens.

She turns toward —

EXT. PARK – DAY

Families.

Mothers pushing prams.

Children playing.

Mary freezes at the edge of the grass.

Her breathing grows shallow.

She watches a YOUNG WOMAN lift her child, laughing.

Mary's fists curl.

MARY

(low)

You don't deserve this.

The whispers surge.

VOICES (V.O.)

She's just like Jemma.

Mary steps forward.

Her face hardens.

Decision settling in.

INT. PUBLIC TOILETS – MOMENTS LATER

Mary splashes water on her face.

Looks at herself in the mirror.

Eyes dark.

MARY

They're all the same.

She exits.

EXT. PARK PATH – CONTINUOUS

Mary follows the young woman at a distance.

Her footsteps slow.

Measured.

Predatory.

EXT. WOODED EDGE OF PARK – DAY

The woman steps off the path to answer her phone.

Mary approaches from behind.

MARY

Excuse me—

The woman turns.

Fear registers.

Mary lunges.

They tumble into the trees.

Muffled SCREAM.

Mary straddles her.

Hands clamp over mouth.

A knife flashes.

Blood spills into leaves.

The woman goes still.

Mary rises slowly.

Breathing hard.

No relief.

Only emptiness.

INT. MARY'S HOUSE – NIGHT

Mary enters silently.

Locks the door.

Her hands shake.

She climbs the stairs.

INT. CHILDREN'S BEDROOM – NIGHT

Nightlight hums.

Two perfect beds.

Mary sinks onto Daniel's mattress.

MARY

(whispering)

I'm protecting you.

She presses Emily's bear to her chest.

MARY

They'll all understand.

She rocks gently.

Alone.

Not alone.

INT. MARY'S KITCHEN – MORNING

Grey light filters through the curtains.

Mary stands at the counter, staring at nothing.

Her hands tremble slightly.

The WHISPERS creep back.

VOICES (V.O.)

You're losing control.

Mary presses her palms flat on the worktop.

MARY

No. I'm fine.

She sets out breakfast with robotic precision.

Two plates. Two glasses of milk.

She calls upstairs.

MARY

Emily... Daniel...

No reply.

Her breathing tightens.

INT. CHILDREN'S BEDROOM – MOMENTS LATER

Mary opens the door.

Two perfectly made beds.

She steps inside slowly.

Touches Daniel's blanket.

Straightens Emily's pillow.

MARY

I'm doing this for you.

Her eyes dart to the corners of the room.

MARY

I won't let them take you.

INT. LIVING ROOM – LATER

Mary sits rigid on the sofa.

News plays quietly.

Another REPORT about Jemma.

Another REPORT about a woman attacked in the park.

Mary switches the TV off.

Her reflection stares back from the black screen.

MARY

They're connecting it.

Her phone BUZZES.

She flinches.

Checks it.

A missed call from THOMAS.

She doesn't return it.

INT. BATHROOM – DAY

Mary grips the sink.

Studies her face in the mirror.

Dark circles.

Sunken cheeks.

MARY

You're okay.

The whispers curl around her thoughts.

VOICES (V.O.)

You won't stop now.

She turns the tap on full.

Water ROARS.

INT. LIVING ROOM – NIGHT

Mary rocks gently, clutching Emily's stuffed bear.

MARY

I'll keep you safe.

She presses the bear to her chest.

Tears slide silently down her face.

The room feels crowded — though she's alone.

INT. KITCHEN – MORNING

Mary's phone vibrates on the counter.

She stares at it for several seconds.

CALLER ID: THOMAS.

She finally answers.

MARY

Hello?

THOMAS (V.O.)

I was worried about you.

Mary closes her eyes.

MARY

I've just... been busy.

THOMAS (V.O.)

Can we meet? Just coffee. I think it might help.

Mary hesitates.

The whispers stir.

VOICES (V.O.)

Don't let him in.

MARY

I don't know...

THOMAS (V.O.)

No pressure. I just want to make sure you're okay.

A long beat.

MARY

...Alright.

EXT. COFFEE SHOP – DAY

Mary approaches hesitantly.

Her shoulders are hunched.

She scans the street before entering.

INT. COFFEE SHOP – CONTINUOUS

Warm lighting.

Muted chatter.

Thomas waits at a small table.

He smiles gently when he sees her.

THOMAS

Hey.

MARY

Hi.

They sit.

An awkward silence.

THOMAS

You don't look great.

MARY

(smiles weakly)

Neither would you.

Thomas studies her.

THOMAS

You don't have to carry everything alone, Mary.

Mary stirs her coffee.

Hands shaking.

MARY

I don't really have a choice.

THOMAS

Everyone does.

She looks away.

MARY

You don't understand.

THOMAS

Maybe not. But I care.

His sincerity unsettles her.

She stands abruptly.

MARY

I should go.

THOMAS

Mary—

She's already moving toward the door.

EXT. STREET OUTSIDE COFFEE SHOP – DAY

Mary walks fast.

Breathing shallow.

The whispers return immediately.

VOICES (V.O.)

He'll see what you are.

She doesn't look back.

INT. MARY'S HOUSE – NIGHT

Mary sits on the edge of Daniel's bed.

Emily's bear in her lap.

MARY

He can't take you from me.

Her voice cracks.

MARY

No one can.

She pulls the bear close.

Eyes hardening.

Something inside her settles.

INT. MARY'S KITCHEN – MORNING

Muted daylight bleeds through the curtains.

Mary stands rigid at the counter.

Two untouched bowls of oatmeal sit on the table.

Honey drizzled perfectly.

MARY

Emily... Daniel...

Silence.

The WHISPERS creep in.

VOICES (V.O.)

They're coming for them.

Mary grips the counter harder.

MARY

That's not true.

Her knuckles whiten.

VOICES (V.O.)

They'll take your children away.

Mary shakes her head violently.

MARY

They love me. They need me.

She turns away from the table.

INT. LIVING ROOM – CONTINUOUS

Mary scrubs already-clean surfaces.

Her hands are raw.

Sweat beads on her forehead.

VOICES (V.O.)

Ungrateful.

She slams the cloth down.

MARY

Stop.

She presses her palms to her temples.

Breathing shallow.

INT. CHILDREN'S BEDROOM – LATE MORNING

Mary kneels beside Emily's bed.

Touches the stuffed bear.

MARY

I won't let anything happen to you.

Her voice trembles.

MARY

No matter what.

She hugs the bear tightly.

Tears soak into its worn fabric.

INT. LIVING ROOM – AFTERNOON

Mary sits in darkness.

Curtains closed.

The whispers soften but persist.

VOICES (V.O.)

Protect them.

MARY

I will.

Her resolve hardens.

EXT. RESIDENTIAL STREET – LATE AFTERNOON

Mary walks quickly, coat pulled tight.

Neighbours glance from behind curtains.

Mary keeps her head down.

VOICES (V.O.)

They're watching you.

Her pace increases.

Hands clenched.

INT. MARY'S HOUSE – NIGHT

Mary sits on the edge of Daniel's bed.

Emily's bear in her lap.

MARY

Even if it means losing everything else.

She rocks gently.

The room feels full.

Though no one is there.

INT. MARY'S KITCHEN – MORNING

Bright sunlight cuts through the room harshly.

Mary grips the counter.

Her chest rises and falls rapidly.

VOICES (V.O.)

They're coming for them.

She stares at the untouched breakfast plates.

MARY

They need me.

VOICES (V.O.)

Or are you fooling yourself?

Mary lets out a sharp breath.

Her nerves are frayed.

EXT. PARK – AFTERNOON

Families everywhere.

Children laughing.

Mothers chatting.

Mary stands at the edge of the path, frozen.

Her eyes lock onto a WOMAN pushing a pram.

The whispers surge.

VOICES (V.O.)

She thinks she's better than you.

Mary follows.

Slow.

Measured.

Predatory.

EXT. QUIET PARK PATH – CONTINUOUS

The woman steps aside to answer her phone.

Mary approaches.

MARY

Excuse me—

The woman turns.

Sees Mary's face.

Fear registers.

Mary lunges.

EXT. WOODED EDGE OF PARK – MOMENTS LATER

They crash through brush.

Mary forces the woman down.

A hand over her mouth.

The KNIFE flashes.

Blood stains fallen leaves.

The woman goes still.

Mary stands slowly.

Breathing hard.

No relief.

Only numbness.

INT. MARY'S HOUSE – NIGHT

Mary enters silently.

Locks the door.

Her hands shake.

She climbs the stairs.

INT. CHILDREN'S BEDROOM – NIGHT

Soft nightlight hums.

Mary collapses onto the floor.

Clutches Emily's bear.

MARY

(whispering)

I did it for you.

Her body rocks gently.

MARY

They won't take you.

Tears fall freely.

She stares at the empty beds.

Still believing.

INT. MARY'S BEDROOM – MORNING

Rain taps softly against the window.

Mary jolts awake.

Her breathing shallow.

Flash images of the park. Blood. Screaming.

She presses her hands to her temples.

VOICES (V.O.)

They're closing in.

MARY

No... they don't know.

She sits up.

Looks toward the children's room.

Her eyes soften.

MARY

I won't lose you.

INT. KITCHEN – LATER

Mary scrubs the counter until her hands ache.

Vacuum hums in the background.

She wipes the table again.

Already spotless.

VOICES (V.O.)

You're slipping.

Mary's reflection stares back from the window.

Hollow.

Unrecognisable.

MARY

Everything's fine.

She forces a smile.

EXT. RESIDENTIAL STREET – AFTERNOON

Mary walks quickly.

Avoids eye contact with neighbours.

Curtains twitch.

VOICES (V.O.)

They're talking about you.

Mary clenches her fists.

Nails dig into palms.

She lowers her head and keeps moving.

INT. MARY'S HOUSE – EVENING

Mary sits in silence.

Emily's bear in her lap.

MARY

I'll keep you safe.

Her voice barely audible.

She rocks gently.

INT. MARY'S LIVING ROOM – MORNING

Overcast light fills the room.

Mary peers through a small gap in the curtain.

Across the street — THOMAS'S HOUSE.

Blue shutters.

Small garden.

Single oak tree.

VOICES (V.O.)

He's watching you.

Mary steps back.

Her stomach churns.

VOICES (V.O.)

You let him in too far.

She turns away from the window.

INT. KITCHEN – CONTINUOUS

Mary cleans obsessively.

Counters.

Windows.

Carpet.

Her movements sharp.

Mechanical.

VOICES (V.O.)

He's too close to the truth.

Mary grips the cleaning rag.

MARY

He won't take them.

EXT. STREET – MIDDAY

Mary locks her door.

Pulls on her coat.

Takes a steadying breath.

Her feet carry her forward.

Unconsciously.

Toward Thomas's house.

EXT. THOMAS'S HOUSE – CONTINUOUS

Mary stops outside.

Stares at the blue shutters.

Her chest tightens.

VOICES (V.O.)

You have to stop him.

She hesitates.

Then steps closer.

Hand hovering near the doorbell.

She pulls back.

Turns away.

Walks quickly.

INT. CHILDREN'S BEDROOM – NIGHT

Mary kneels beside Emily's bed.

Brushes fingers over the stuffed bear.

MARY

I won't let anything happen to you.

Tears fall.

MARY

No matter what.

She presses the bear to her chest.

The whispers soften.

VOICES (V.O.)

Protect them.

Mary nods slowly.

Her resolve hardens.

INT. MARY'S LIVING ROOM – MORNING

Grey daylight filters through thin curtains.

Mary sits rigid on the couch.

Emily's stuffed bear in her lap.

The TV flickers with muted news reports.

Another woman attacked.

Mary switches it off.

Her reflection stares back from the black screen.

MARY

They're connecting it.

The WHISPERS creep in.

VOICES (V.O.)

They'll take everything.

Mary presses her palms into her eyes.

MARY

Not while I'm here.

INT. KITCHEN – LATER

Mary prepares breakfast.

Two bowls.

Two glasses of milk.

She waits.

Silence.

MARY

Emily... Daniel...

Her voice cracks.

The bowls remain untouched.

INT. CHILDREN'S BEDROOM – MIDDAY

Mary stands in the doorway.

Two perfect beds.

No movement.

Her chest tightens.

MARY

I'm still here.

She smooths Daniel's blanket.

Straightens Emily's pillow.

She backs away slowly.

INT. LIVING ROOM – AFTERNOON

Mary paces.

Her phone BUZZES.

She freezes.

CALLER ID: THOMAS.

She doesn't answer.

The buzzing stops.

Her breathing quickens.

VOICES (V.O.)

He's too close.

INT. BATHROOM – EVENING

Mary grips the sink.

Studies herself in the mirror.

Dark circles.

Sunken cheeks.

MARY

You're okay.

The whisper curls around her thoughts.

VOICES (V.O.)

You won't stop now.

She turns the tap on full.

Water ROARS.

INT. MARY'S LIVING ROOM – MORNING

Heavy clouds outside.

Mary peers through the curtains.

Across the street, THOMAS'S HOUSE.

Blue shutters.

Oak tree.

Her jaw tightens.

VOICES (V.O.)

He's watching you.

Mary steps back.

Her stomach twists.

INT. KITCHEN – CONTINUOUS

Mary cleans obsessively.

Counters.

Windows.

Already spotless.

VOICES (V.O.)

He'll take them from you.

Mary slams the cloth down.

MARY

He won't.

EXT. STREET – MIDDAY

Mary locks her door.

Her feet carry her forward.

Without conscious thought.

Toward Thomas's street.

EXT. NEAR THOMAS'S HOUSE – CONTINUOUS

Mary stops.

Heart pounding.

She stares at the blue shutters.

Her breathing shallow.

VOICES (V.O.)

He's dangerous.

She steps closer.

Raises her hand.

Almost rings the bell.

She pulls back suddenly.

Turns and walks fast.

INT. CHILDREN'S BEDROOM – NIGHT

Mary sits on Emily's bed.

Clutching the stuffed bear.

MARY

I'll protect you.

Her voice trembles.

MARY

Even if it means losing everything else.

She presses the bear to her chest.

The whispers soften.

But remain.

INT. CHILDREN'S BEDROOM – NIGHT

A storm rages outside.

Rain lashes against the windows.

Thunder RUMBLES.

Mary sits on the floor, back pressed to the wall.

Emily's stuffed bear clutched tightly in her arms.

Her breathing is shallow.

Her eyes dart around the room.

VOICES (V.O.)

They're lying to you.

MARY

(whispering)

I know.

She tightens her grip on the bear.

MARY

I won't let them take you.

Her gaze drifts to the neatly made beds.

Emily's pink quilt.

Daniel's blue comforter.

Thomas's words echo in her mind.

THOMAS (V.O.)

There are no children.

MARY

(aloud, shaking her head)

No. He's wrong.

Her breathing becomes ragged.

Fragments of memory surface —

Empty plates.

Untouched toys.

People staring.

Her grip loosens.

The bear slips from her hands and lands on the floor.

Mary stands abruptly.

The walls feel too close.

She grabs her coat and stumbles downstairs.

EXT. RESIDENTIAL STREET – NIGHT

Rain soaks through Mary's clothes instantly.

She walks without direction.

Streetlights cast warped shadows on wet pavement.

VOICES (V.O.)

They think you're crazy.

Mary wraps her arms around herself.

Her steps quicken.

VOICES (V.O.)

You've let them in too far.

Her eyes burn with tears.

She turns onto the main road.

Breathing hard.

Lost.

INT. CHILDREN'S BEDROOM – LATER THAT NIGHT

Mary sits once more on Emily's bed.

The nightlight casts soft amber light.

She picks up the stuffed bear.

Presses it to her chest.

MARY

(voice breaking)

I tried so hard.

Tears soak into the fabric.

MARY

I don't know what to do anymore.

The silence presses down on her.

For the first time, she imagines life without Emily and Daniel.

The thought terrifies her.

And comforts her.

Her storm begins to quiet.

Then —

Her eyes harden.

Thomas.

He planted the doubt.

He shattered her world.

Mary rises slowly.

Her movements deliberate.

She slips a KNIFE into her coat pocket.

The weight feels familiar.

Grounding.

EXT. STREET – NIGHT

Rain falls steadily.

Mary walks toward Thomas's house.

Empty streets.

Footsteps muffled by water.

Her breathing steady despite the chaos inside her.

EXT. THOMAS'S HOUSE – CONTINUOUS

Blue shutters.

Warm light glowing inside.

Mary stops.

Stares.

Her hand trembles as she reaches for the doorbell.

She hesitates.

Then presses it.

INT. THOMAS'S HOUSE – MOMENTS LATER

The door opens.

THOMAS stands there, surprised.

THOMAS

Mary?

She pushes past him.

INT. CHILDREN'S BEDROOM (MARY'S HOUSE – LATER)

Mary curls on the floor, clutching the bear.

Thomas enters cautiously.

THOMAS

Mary... please. Let me help you.

Mary looks up.

Tears streaming.

MARY

I've lost everything.

THOMAS

You haven't. But you have to trust someone.

He steps closer.

Gentle.

Careful.

For a moment —

Hope flickers in Mary's eyes.

Then the WHISPERS explode.

VOICES (V.O.)

He'll destroy you.

Mary lunges for the knife.

Thomas reacts instantly, grabbing her wrist.

They struggle.

The blade CLATTERS to the floor.

THOMAS

Mary, stop!

She sobs violently.

MARY

I have to protect them!

THOMAS

(shouting, breaking)

They're gone! There's no one left to protect!

The words hit her like a tidal wave.

Mary freezes.

Her chest heaves.

Thomas pulls her into his arms.

She collapses against him.

MARY

(whispering)

I'm so sorry...

Thomas holds her tightly.

THOMAS

It's not your fault. You're not alone anymore.

Mary sobs uncontrollably.

The storm outside begins to fade.

INT. CHILDREN'S BEDROOM – NIGHT

The room feels suffocatingly still.

Mary sits on the floor, knees pulled tight to her chest.

Emily's stuffed bear clenched in both hands.

A soft nightlight casts long shadows on the walls.

Thomas stands several feet away.

He doesn't move closer.

The tension between them feels fragile.

THOMAS

(softly)

Mary... you don't have to live like this anymore.

Mary doesn't look up.

Her tears soak into the bear.

MARY

They're all I have.

Her voice trembles.

MARY

Without them, I'm nothing.

Thomas takes a cautious step forward.

THOMAS

I know it feels that way... but they're not real. You've been carrying this pain for so long—

MARY

(sharp)

Stop!

She looks up, eyes blazing.

MARY

You don't get to tell me what's real!

Thomas freezes.

Hands raised gently.

THOMAS

I don't know what you've been through... but I can see how much you're hurting. I just want to help.

Mary laughs bitterly.

MARY

Help? No one can help me.

The WHISPERS return.

VOICES (V.O.)

He's lying.

VOICES (V.O.)

He'll take everything.

Mary's breathing quickens.

MARY

I don't know what to believe anymore.

VOICES (V.O.)

Protect what's yours.

She stares at Thomas.

Hatred mixes with fear.

MARY

Why are you doing this?

THOMAS

Because I care about you.

The sincerity cuts deep.

Mary falters.

Her eyes flick to the KNIFE on the floor.

Something snaps.

She lunges.

Thomas grabs her wrist.

The blade CLATTERS away.

They struggle.

THOMAS

Mary, stop!

MARY

(sobbing)

I have to protect them!

THOMAS

They're gone!

His voice breaks.

THOMAS

There's no one left to protect!

Mary freezes.

The words hit her hard.

Her chest heaves.

Thomas pulls her into his arms.

Mary collapses against him.

MARY

(whispering)

I'm so sorry.

Thomas holds her tightly.

THOMAS

You're not alone anymore.

INT. MARY'S HOUSE – NIGHT

The house is silent.

The refrigerator HUMS loudly in the kitchen.

Outside, the storm has eased.

Rain-soaked air drifts through a cracked window.

Mary sobs quietly in Thomas's arms.

Her body trembles.

THOMAS

You're safe now.

Mary shakes her head.

MARY

They were my everything.

THOMAS

You're still here. You still have a chance to heal.

Mary pulls back slightly.

Her eyes red.

MARY

How?

Thomas hesitates.

THOMAS

It's going to take time. But the first step is letting someone in.

Mary's gaze drifts to Emily's stuffed bear lying on the floor.

Fresh tears fall.

MARY

I don't think I can do this.

Thomas places a gentle hand on her shoulder.

THOMAS

You're stronger than you think.

Mary lets out a hollow laugh.

She looks away.

Her world shattered.

The illusion finally broken.

She clings weakly to Thomas as the silence settles.

INT. MARY'S HOUSE – EARLY MORNING

Soft grey light creeps through the curtains.

The house feels hollow.

Mary sits at the dining table, wrapped in a blanket.

Her hands tremble around a cold mug of tea.

Thomas stands nearby, exhausted.

Police lights flash faintly through the window.

Mary stares into nothing.

MARY

(quiet, broken)

I don't know who I am anymore.

Thomas crouches in front of her.

THOMAS

You're someone who's been hurting for a long time.

Mary swallows hard.

MARY

They're gone.

Her voice barely carries.

Thomas nods.

THOMAS

But you're still here.

She looks up at him.

Empty.

MARY

I tried so hard.

Tears spill.

Thomas rests a gentle hand on her arm.

THOMAS

I know.

INT. CHILDREN'S BEDROOM – LATER

The room is stripped of warmth.

Beds neatly made.

Emily's bear lies abandoned on the floor.

Mary stands in the doorway.

She can't bring herself to step inside.

Her knees buckle.

Thomas catches her.

MARY

They were my whole world.

THOMAS

You built that world to survive.

Mary closes her eyes.

EXT. MARY'S HOUSE – MORNING

An ambulance idles.

Two PARAMEDICS wait quietly.

Mary steps outside wrapped in a blanket.

She pauses.

Looks back at the house.

Every memory trapped inside.

She turns away.

Thomas watches her go.

His face unreadable.

INT. HOSPITAL ROOM – DAY

White walls.

Beeping monitors.

Mary sits on the edge of the bed, staring at her hands.

Emily's stuffed bear rests beside her.

A PSYCHIATRIST sits nearby, calm and patient.

PSYCHIATRIST

Mary... do you understand why you're here?

Mary nods slowly.

MARY

Because my children aren't real.

The words cut deep.

She closes her eyes.

PSYCHIATRIST

You've been carrying unimaginable pain.

Mary swallows.

MARY

I just wanted to protect them.

The psychiatrist nods gently.

PSYCHIATRIST

Now it's time to protect yourself.

Mary looks at the bear.

Her grip loosens.

For the first time, she sets it down.

EXT. HOSPITAL GARDEN – LATE AFTERNOON

Mary sits on a bench.

Leaves rustle softly.

Sunlight filters through branches.

She breathes deeply.

For the first time in a long while —

Silence.

No whispers.

Just air.

Just space.

Her eyes close.

Not healed.

But present.

INT. THOMAS'S CAR – EVENING

Thomas sits alone behind the wheel.

He doesn't start the engine.

He stares ahead.

Mary's screams echo faintly in his mind.

Her knife flashing.

Her collapse into his arms.

His jaw tightens.

Something inside him fractures.

He exhales slowly.

Starts the car.

Drives away.