

The Mary Wells Story

By
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WGA Copy

EXT. UNITED STATES CONGRESS.

Outside the United States Congress, walking up the Capitol steps, slowly, is singer MARY WELLS, suffering from late stages of larynx cancer, MARY begins coughing, bends over letting it subside before catching her breath.

VOICE OF NEWSCASTER

Singer Mary Wells will be addressing a joint session of Congress this morning urging greater funding for cancer research...

V.O.

MAYE JAMES HOLLER

That morning, Mary Esther Wells, once known as The First Lady of Motown, who grew up on Fourth Avenue in the Blackbottom neighborhood of Detroit, speaking on behalf of all cancer victims, would be telling the most powerful men in America the most important thing they'd hear all day, shot-to-hell voice and all.

Mary's breathing is labored. As Mary stops to catch her breath, her mind reflects back...

FLASHBACK-1960

EXT: OLD, GRAY TENEMENT."DETROIT:AFTERNOON

Mid-afternoon, a blustery, windy Saturday in winter. WE PULL IN through a chintz-curtained window into

INT. MARY WELLS' APARTMENT-CONTINUOUS

...pristine kitchen, where a pretty black teenage girl is on her hands on knees; hair tied and tucked neatly under a scarf, wearing an open wool coat, beside her mother on the other end of the room, both robustly scrubbing the cold linoleum floor on their hands and knees.

MARY

Mama, this old floor is so cold. My knees are frozen! And the water feels like ice on my hands!

GENEVA

Girl, stop complaining. We blessed
to have a roof over our heads. Some
folks be out in the cold, nowhere
to go.

MARY

But, Mama, it's so cold inside, I
may as well be outside.

Her mother GENEVA looks at her daughter quizzically for a
moment, then suddenly emits a loud, cackling laugh, which
causes Mary to join in with her laugh.

GENEVA

Still no luck getting a singing
gig?

Mary looks downcast and keeps scrubbing as she shakes her
head in the negative.

GENEVA (CONT'D)

The good Lord blessed you with a
precious gift, child.

MARY

Yes, Mama.

GENEVA

So, you best keep looking for
singing gigs, Mary, or these floors
will be staring back at you every
day of your life, asking why you
didn't work harder when you had the
chance.

Mary looks up at her mother, silently nods, goes back to
scrubbing the floor.

FLASHBACK:

"1958"

EXT./INT.1CHURCH, SUNDAY MORNING: MORNING

Church service, black congregants clapping and praising
joyously. We see a heavy-set 40-something year-old woman
sitting near GENEVA fixing and fussing over her two
adolescent sons' appearances, straightening their bow ties,
dusting lint off their suit shoulders.

They look typically disdainful, until they catch GENEVA's eye as she winks at them. They smile gratefully in return.

GENEVA is joyous as she spots her daughter in the front row of the choir before stepping forward to sing a solo. They exchange smiles, her mother bursting with pride.

WOMAN

(whispers to Geneva)

Look, young sister's about to sing
her solo!

Geneva, now overwhelmed by nervous energy, fans herself excitedly.

MARY, looking radiant in a red woolen jumper matched with a plaid blouse, a bow tied at the neckline. She has a music sheet in her hands and opens her mouth to sing.

MARY

Jesus, wash my sins away...

Those seated near Geneva turn to smile and share their approval, serving only to swell her already fierce pride in her only daughter. The woman in the pew in front of her, turns to whisper to Geneva

WOMAN

Your baby has a sultry voice,
Geneva. Like Lola Falana.

Geneva stifles a giggle, playfully slaps the woman on the forearm, shaking her head. One of the woman's sons is quietly giggling. He turns to his brother.

BROTHER 1

Lola Falana!

They both giggle, before their mama, with stern expression, smacks them both across their knees with her rolled up church program.

SUPER: "3 YEARS LATER."

A sign on the roadside reads "Welcome to Mobile, Alabama, a good place to raise your kids," picture of a white family below.

INT. PHONE BOOTH-DAY

Inside we see a young, attractive, casually dressed 18-year-old black woman.

V.O.

MAYE JAMES HOLLER

Detroit in the 1960s was where everyone wanted to be. Music, nightclubs, cars. No shortage of work or fun. My cousin Eugene suggested I stay with him till I got on my feet Gene told me I should call his friend's sister who he said was trying to be a singer, was my same age, and that we'd hit it off. And that is how I met Mary Esther Wells.

EXT. ESTABLISHING GRAYSTONE NIGHTCLUB. DETROIT-LATE NIGHT

Barret Strong is singing his hit "Money," while MARY and her new friend MAYE are laughing, talking with some people in the corner. There is a dance going on. A man asks Mary to dance, and she accepts, while the same happens to MAYE. Thy finish, and MARY grabs MAYE by the arm, leading her to a quiet corner to talk.

MARY

I'm having some fun, how 'bout you, Maye?

MAYE

Oh, sure I am, Mary. The music is tight.

MARY

(looks at her watch)
Yeah, yeah...Well, listen, your cousin dropped us off, but I don't think he's coming back, do you?

MAYE shakes her head.

MARY

No, I don't think he is, either.

MARY (CONT'D)

Girl, we need to find us a ride home. I don't want Mama calling DPD.

Two young men sharply dressed and in raincoats appear ready to depart but have overheard the girls' concerns.

ONE YOUNG MAN

We're just dropping by a party on Woodward, where do you live?

MARY

In the Blackbottom projects.

SECOND YOUNG MAN

OK, cool, that's on our way. C'mon we'll give you a ride home.

EXT. BRICK APARTMENT BUILDING. INT. APT.

There is a full-force party, as the girls sit impatiently, checking their watches as it is growing late.

MARY

Those two guys that dropped us off been gone over half an hour now. I sure hope they plan on returning.

MAYE

Oh, girl, now c'mon! Why wouldn't they? After all, they said it was on their way home.

MARY

So strange. I wonder where they went...

Just then two young men in raincoats and hats enter the party. We recognize them to be their ride home, as they motion for the girls to follow them outside. The girls, breathing sighs of relief, grab their coats and purses and head out the door.

An older model Buick is parked just outside. The girls enter the car; the driver speeds away.

INT. BUICK (MOVING)-NIGHT

MARY is quietly sniffing an odor, as is MAYE. A CLOSE-UP of the driver and one of his passengers indicate chicken grease on their faces, and on the driver's hands, which leave grease on the steering wheel. MAYE leans into MARY as she whispers in her ear.

MARY
(Sotto voce)
Chicken! They been eating chicken!

The girls silently convulse in hysterical laughter, which continues even after the young men drop them off. Even as MARY and MAYE wave good-bye, they then bend over as laughter erupts loudly from both of them.

MARY (CONT'D)
Oh..oh..oh, God.
(Laughing)
Can you believe that shit? Those
fools were too cheap to offer us
any chicken. They had to sneak off
and leave us at the damn party...

She's laughing hysterically as MAYE joins in on the laughter.

They continue to laugh until both are left

gasping for air, culminating with the two hugging each other as survivors might, laughing all the while.

We sense that the shared experience bonds the two girls as friends from that point on, as they chatter non-stop.

NORTHERN RECORDS RECORDING STUDIO.DAY-EXT. SMALL, ONE FLOOR STUCCO BUILDING. "LATE AFTERNOON/INT.-STUDIO. PLACARD READS "OTIS WILLIAMS AND THE DISTANTS"

A tall, handsome black man dressed sharply, 19-year-old lead singer OTIS WILLIAMS stands beside Mary smiling confidently. On the other side of a large window, we see an all-male quartet performing a doo wop hit of the day, under the ebullient direction of an imperious, overbearing woman named JOHNNIE MAE MATHEWS, as a discouraged Mary leans toward Otis to whisper in his ear.

MARY
Otis, Johnnie Mae acts like I'm
invisible. I'm just wasting my time
here.

OTIS smiles sweetly at her, running the back of his hand down her arm.

OTIS
Oh, now, baby girl, don't be so
down. You'll get your turn.

Mary shrugs, shaking her head. Just then we see the session end, the singers begin to depart through the door as MARY and OTIS step aside. JOHNNIE MAE rushes hurriedly toward OTIS, her back to MARY.

JOHNNIE MAE
Otis Williams and The Distant!
Y'all are next.

MARY and OTIS look at each other as MARY taps MAE on the shoulder. She turns abruptly to face MARY, a look of exasperation clear. MARY is nervous yet remains resolute in her quest.

MARY
Excuse me, Miss Mathews. My friend
ROBERT BATEMAN, you know, from the
Satin Tones...

MAE cuts her off.

JOHNNIE MAE
Yes, yes, I know Robert.

MARY
Well...Robert said if I came down
here and you gave me a chance to
sing, surely...

JOHNNIE MAE interjects again.

JOHNNIE MAE
Look, honey, if Robert wants you to
sing with his group, he'll have to
tell me hisself, but he ain't done
that. And you are not singing with
this group. C'mon Otis, time is
money, baby.

He shrugs and follows her. Mary is momentarily stung by MAE's curtness, disconsolate, until she suddenly spots ROBERT BATEMAN coming down the hallway. She hurriedly rushes up to greet him, a sweet, if not sycophantic, fawning expression engulfing her face.

MARY

Hi, Robert. My, you look so handsome in that...is that a Botany 500 suit? Mmm...

She straightens his tie. Gently, he removes her hand.

ROBERT

Mary, Mary, oh contrary, no you can't sing with our group. How many times are you gonna ask me that? You like Lucy Ricardo asking Ricky to join the damn act!

They both start to laugh. He's not wrong.

MARY

Oh, c'mon, Robert. You know I can sing. You said so yourself! Why won't you give me a chance?

ROBERT stares at her for a minute. He breaks into an easy smile.

ROBERT

Look, I just can't see how we'd fit a girl singer in an all-male group, is all.

Mary looks nonplussed as she continues to plead her case.

MARY

The Platters have Zola Taylor. The Skyliners have Janet Vogel.

She pauses hopefully, but Robert is unmoored.

MARY (CONT'D)

(playfully singing)

*I don't have plans and schemes
I don't have hopes and dreams
I don't have anything
Since I don't have you*

Robert throws up his hands, starts to walk away, Mary follows in pursuit singing the chorus in his ear.

MARY (CONT'D)

You-ooh! You-ooh! You Ooh!

ROBERT starts to laugh and playfully pushes MARY as he departs down the hall, before turning to face her.

ROBERT

Hey...hook me up with your cute
little friend Maye. Then I'll think
about whether or not we need Zola
or Janet..

MARY smiles, shakes her head in mock disgust. As she turns to walk home, she literally bumps into another singer, causing his bag of French fries to scatter across the concrete floor. MARY immediately squats down in her skirt and heels to retrieve them"

MARY

Oh, my goodness! I am so sorry.

WILSON laughs and as he grabs her arm, lifts her up. She begins picking up the fries before he kneels down beside her. She is now facing him, looking sheepish; both embarrassed and astonished.

WILSON

Girl, I ain't eating no fries off
the damn floor. You just gonna have
to accompany me back to Duly's and
have lunch with me.

Mary looks at him sideways.

MARY

Have lunch with you? Why, I don't
even know your name.

WILSON

Wilson. Wilson Pickett.

MARY

Mary Wells. Are you a singer?

WILSON

Am I a singer? I am a singer,
dancer, entertainer extraordinaire.
Now you can't be a singer because
Johnnie Mae don't cotton to girl
singers.

They start to walk outside, chatting the entire time.

EXT. FRONT PORCH OF MARY'S APARTMENT BUILDING. NIGHTTIME.

WILSON has walked MARY home. They sit on the porch stoop, holding hands, sweetly.

WILSON

You know what, Mary? We gonna be
major stars someday.

She looks at him smiling broadly. He smiles back. As he is about to kiss her, her mother turns the light on and calls her name. They giggle.

EXT: SCHOOL BUILDING. NOON.

The lawn outside of a high school, as Mary and a girlfriend pick at their sandwiches, more interested in talking than eating. A transistor radio nearby is blaring Jackie Wilson's *Lonely Teardrops*. Some kids are even dancing, others singing along, as is MARY.

MARY

*Lonely teardrops, mine don't ever
dry up...*

As she belts out the chorus, they all stop and listen to her like an old E.F. Hutton commercial.

MARY (CONT'D)

*Just say you will, say you
will...say you will..Oooh....*

When the song commences, all applaud.

CLASSMATE

Oh, Mary, you do Jackie Wilson
almost as good as Jackie does!

MARY turns immediately serious.

MARY

Oh, now, girl, don't ever say that.
He's my special baby. Ain't nobody
can sing and dance like Jackie
Wilson. Not even Wilson Pickett...
but don't tell him that!

They laugh. Mary takes a small bite of her sandwich and suddenly straightens with a start, as though she has thought of an incredible idea. And she has.

EXT. LOCAL DRUGSTORE, INT. SMALL LUNCH COUNTER

Mary and Maye are sipping cokes and sharing a plate of fries. As Maye dunks a French fry in a pool of catsup, Mary, arms flailing in excitement, breaks down her plan...

MARY

Maye! I got us a plan, girl! You go out with Robert and I'll double with Wilson. How's that sound?

MAYE

So, Robert will let you sing in his group, then?

MARY grins Cheshire-cat-like, laughs knowingly. She shakes her head.

Maye looks slightly confused.

MARY

No, no I got something better in mind. I know somebody BIG that Robert knows.

Maye's mouth is now agape.

MARY (CONT'D)

If you go out with him--and I know you will, because I'd do the same for you--he can introduce me to his famous friend.

MAYE

Oh, Lord, have mercy! He knows Jackie Wilson.

MARY shakes her head.

MARY

Uh-uh, no, but he knows someone who knows Jackie. Look, just say you'll go out with Robert. Will you do it for me, Maye? Please?

MAYE nods in agreement before MARY squeals with excited delight.

MAYE

But Mary, if your mama believes in you and everyone who's heard you sing says you got it going on, why are you bothering to write a song for Jackie Wilson?

MARY

(resigned)

I don't know, Maye.

(MORE)

MARY (CONT'D)

I love singing, but no one is giving me a chance to prove it, and I'm having doubts myself. This way at least I can do something for Jackie.

Maye smiles, shakes her head in bewilderment.

MAYE

Honey, that is one crazy way of backing into the music business.

MARY

Well, black folks been comin' through the back door for centuries, ain't nothin' new. But at least we're all under the same roof.

INT. WELLS HOUSEHOLD. SUNDAY EVENING

Mary home alone, cleaning her bedroom, listening to Jackie Wilson sing "To Be Loved," while dancing dreamily across the room. She is holding a church dress as she sways to and fro, at a though pretending to be dancing with a man.

The record stops. She takes the 45 RPM off the spindle and examines the label for a moment.

MARY

Written by Berry Gordy Jr., Jackie Wilson.

(sighs)

What I wouldn't give to write a song for Jackie Wilson.

Mary suddenly enters her closet and closes the door most of the way, worried someone will come home and find her. She gets on her knees, closes her eyes tightly, and clasps her hands in prayer.

MARY (CONT'D)

Dear Lord, I know I have asked you for warmer winters, nicer clothes, more money for Mama. But this...this is my heart, Lord. This is what I want to do. Please, Lord, allow me to write a song for Jackie Wilson. I love Jackie, Lord. Well, not in *that* way, you know. I'm a good girl, Lord. Too good!

(MORE)

MARY (CONT'D)
 Please give me your divine
 inspiration so that I may write a
 great song for Jackie.

She starts to stand up, then remembers something she forgot
 in her prayer. She kneels again.

MARY (CONT'D)
 Amen, Lord.

Mary gets up and finds her schoolbooks neatly stacked on a
 small desk in the corner of the room. She opens a spiral
 binder, grabs a pen and begins writing. She begins to hum.

*"...Well, you know you took my
 heart..."*

She bops her head for a bit repeating the phrase
*"Well, you know you took my
 heart..."*

Her eyes light up with thought. She smiles, knowingly.
*And you broke it all
 apart...
 No!...just...you broke it
 apart...Why did our love have to
 start...no. Why did our love baby,
 yeah, yeah, have to ever start...*

We hear this segue into an instrumental of the song, taking
 us along with the visual of Mary ultimately dressing to the
 nines, getting on a bus, and after a short walk gazing at a
 building.

EXT. DOWNTOWN DETROIT. MARQUEE READS: "20 GRAND" NIGHTCLUB."

Whir of Detroit traffic whizzing by, sounds of the city in a
 decaying urban neighborhood; junkies on the sidewalk, a woman
 hurriedly pushing a baby stroller, a man buying a newspaper
 from a coinbox, as a hooker saunters past, smirking at MARY.

Undeterred, she quickly descends the stairs leading down into
 the club. A man stops her.

MARY
 Hello. I'm Mary Wells. I'm a
 songwriter looking for Mr. Gordy.

SECURITY MAN
 A songwriter? You look more like a
 schoolgirl to me, sweetheart.

Mary holds her head up, chin out, straightens her body language as if to indicate that she is indeed a serious songwriter.

MARY

Sir, I can assure you I am a songwriter. I was told by an associate to meet Mr. Gordy here early this evening.

The guard recognizing the name, nods his head. He pauses for a moment and then relents to allow her access. He points over his shoulder to a door.

MARY (CONT'D)

Thank-you very much.

As she walks toward the room where Gordy is, the man turns to yell after her.

SECURITY MAN

Young lady! I would suggest you get that song out of your mouth very fast. Mr. Gordy isn't a man with time to play around.

A singer, Marv Johnson, is on stage rehearsing, mic in hand

MARV JOHNSON

(belting out)

"Baby, you've got what it takes..."

MARY nods, smiles at him, and walks toward the room, as we see BERRY GORDY, a successful black businessman, through MARY's eyes. He is an average looking; about 5'9", short, well-coiffed hair cut; black-rimmed glasses and bedecked in jeweled watch and diamond wedding ring.

Just as she walks toward him with increasingly quick strides in order to keep up with his fast-paced walk, JOHNSON stops singing. With his assistant in tow, he turns and walks toward the other end of the room, where the group The Miracles are awaiting him. MARY is nearly galloping just to keep up with GORDY.

MARY

MR. GORDY! MR. GORDY!

He stops momentarily, annoyed, assuming she is just another music business cling-on about to waste his valuable time, then walks past her. Undeterred, MARY runs after him until she is in stride at his right side.

MARY (CONT'D)
Mr. Gordy, I'm Mary Wells. Robert
Bateman sent me.

GORDY is perturbed now.

BERRY GORDY
Girl, can't you see I'm busier than
a one-armed bass player? I've got
no time for your sales pitch!

She still manages to walk in lockstep with him, refusing to
back away.

MARY
Mr. Gordy, I have a song I wrote.
Just give me an appointment and
I'll come back and sing it for you.
I think it'd be perfect for Jackie
Wilson.

Suddenly curious, GORDY stops, as he mutters his surprise.

BERRY GORDY
Jackie Wilson? Jackie...what the...

He looks at her, she looks at him, smiling sweetly. He sighs,
relenting, but conditionally.

A quartet whose drum kit features "The Miracles" logo,
watches Gordy, waiting patiently.

Annoyed but curious, Gordy motions for her to start singing.

BERRY GORDY (CONT'D)
Okay. Sing It. Right now.

MARY
(shocked)
You mean me? Right here? Now?

BERRY GORDY
(loudly exhales,
exasperated)
Sing your damn song, girl. This
minute!

She looks a bit nervously around the room, then centers
herself for just a moment, closing her eyes, takes a deep
breath, before belting out the words to *Bye Bye Baby*, but
nothing comes out of her mouth except air.

Everyone is hushed in anticipation. Can she sing her song in this moment? Or is she too frightened?

LIGHTNING-QUICK FLASHBACK

Mary imagines the cold linoleum floor, recalling Mama's words...

GENEVA (V.O)

...You don't want these cold floors
staring back at you, asking you why
you didn't work harder...work
harder..."

MARY

(singing directly, almost
defiantly, to Berry
Gordy)

We...e...e...e...lll, you know you
took my heart
And you broke it apart.
Why did our love, baby, yeah, yeah,
Have to ever start...

Mary decides to pour on the sultry, vampish act, replete with gestures and bodily moves, swaying, dipping, dancing just a bit, but totally enticing, which amuses Gordy, who nearly smiles and nods slightly. She allows her voice to be loud, raspy, pouting; sweet and sexy to match her physicality.

MARY (CONT'D)

You know you took my love, threw it
all away. You gonna want my love
someday. Well a bye bye baby
(Bye, bye, bye)
Well, I thought your love was oh so
true.
And you lured me baby, yeah, I
started loving you...

By now all of the other singers in the club have stopped talking and are inching closer to watch this young girl sing and vamp for their boss. Some are clapping or snapping time, musicians slowly even accompany her. His assistant is unabashedly grinning, her head bobbing to the music.

MARY (CONT'D)

Well, your love was
Sweeter than any I know
So don't come back running,
Knockin' on my front door

Mary's right palm traces the heartache on her bosom while her other palm gestures toward Gordy as though he is the cause of her heartache.

MARY (CONT'D)
*Well, you said that I
 Was your only girl
 And there were no others, yeah
 In this whole wide world*

Mary now stands feet apart, hands in the air, belting the last chorus, eyes skyward.

MARY (CONT'D)
*You know you took my love, threw it
 away
 You gonna want my love someday
 Well, a bye bye baby...*

Gordy smiles, nodding, as his assistant raises her eyebrows, nodding as well. The room thunderously applauds.

BERRY GORDY
 All right, all right. You got
 something here.

MARY
 Do you think Jackie will like it?

Berry looks at Mary as though she had something blasphemous. He turns to his assistant, (Esther Gordy), who is holding a clipboard, chortling. She chortles back, as do several in close proximity to them. He turns back to Mary as she anxiously awaits his response.

BERRY GORDY
 Sweetheart, this is your song and
 it's going to be your first record
 for Motown. Be at our offices 9 am
 Monday morning. Are you 18?

She shakes her head.

BERRY GORDY (CONT'D)
 Bring your mama, then.

With that he abruptly turns to walk toward the Miracles, as Mary's joy was clearly evident on her face and in her body language.

EXT. DETROIT STREETS NEAR BLACKBOTTOM. LATE AFTERNOON

She scampers the entirety of the way home, calling her mother as she makes her way down the street.

MARY
Mama! Mama!

Doors open, people stop to watch her run like Wilma Rudolph, out of sheer curiosity.

WELLS HOUSEHOLD-MINUTES LATER

Geneva hears Mary screaming and is at first alarmed. She hurries to the door. MARY arrives, grabs her mother's shoulders as she emits a shriek of sheer joy.

MARY
(screaming with
excitement)
MAMA! MAMA! I GOT IT! I GOT A
CONTRACT WITH MOTOWN RECORDS! THEY
WANT ME TO SING! IMA BE A SINGER,
MAMA!

They both dance up and down, screaming with joy.

GENEVA
Praise the Lord! Praise Jesus!

She raises both arms and again shrieks with joy.

GENEVA (CONT'D)
Hie eyes were on us two sparrows!

EXT. "MOTOWN RECORDS" BRIGHT, CLOUDLESS SUNSHINEY DAY/INT.
MUSIC STUDIO

A bustling, busy enterprise, with multiple recording studios, and numerous singers, musicians rehearsing or recording.

BERRY GORDY walks briskly down the hallway, quickly surveying various Motown entities hard at work: The Temptations dancing in unison, Miracles, Marvelettes, and Supremes all singing, like cacophonies. He stops before a small, corner studio.

There is a band inside the room, with MARY WELLS inside a closed studio in an adjacent portion. The engineers are laying down vocal tracks for *Bye Bye Baby*. She is very serious, laser focused.

Gordy joins several session producers in the control room overseeing MARY's recording session. GORDY's commands and observations pepper the session.

BERRY GORDY

Turn up the bass on that second bridge! More percussion! I can't hear the drums! The horn player needs to come over, not under, the lead guitar...

Mary takes a swig of water. Turning to an assist engineer, she leans into a whisper.

MARY

Tell me, who are these back up singers?

ASSISTANT ENGINEER

Those guys? The Love Tones.

MARY

I thought the Andantes were booked.

ASSISTANT ENGINEER

Scheduling conflicts.

He walks away as she nods her understanding. Shakes her head once he has his back to her. Mary swigs down more water, resumes her place at the mic.

The camera shows a time lapse of various takes, all commencing with the chalk slate board and a studio assistant yelling the take number. MARY looks increasingly exhausted with each take, as she is putting her voice and physicality into each one. Finally, we see and hear "TAKE 22!" By this time Mary is literally growling the lyrics of *Bye Bye Baby*.

She is pouring herself into the song, but her voice is scratchy as well as a bit more resonant as a result.

BERRY GORDY

That's it! That's the one!

An exhausted but happy Mary exhales.

A tall slender, light-skinned young man with green eyes and a short, cropped Afro, whom we just saw with the Miracles and can assume is Smokey Robinson is joined by a striking young woman with a clipboard who has just entered the studio.

SMOKEY

Mary this is Esther Gordy, Berry's sister. She helps organize the tours and personnel that we need.

Mary shakes her hand, smiling through her exhaustion, nods with a smile to Smokey who is departing.

ESTHER GORDY

Mary, you will need another female on tour with you who can assist with clothes, make-up and hair, none of which Herman can do.

MARY

(brightening)

Esther, I have a friend who'd be perfect...

INT. MARY'S BEDROOM. NIGHTTIME

Her friend MAYE is helping MARY experiment with hairstyles and dresses, presumably for her show performances.

MAYE has a box of wigs, while several newly bought gowns are seen hanging on the bedroom door. High-heel shoes in boxes are spread across the floor; make-up is visible on a dressing table across the room. MAYE hands MARY a blonde wig, motions for her to try it on.

MAYE

Oh, my! Now that looks stunning!

MARY

I look like Etta James.

MAYE

And that's a good thing!

Just then the telephone rings from outside the door. We hear MAMA answer it and tell the caller to please wait, while she brings the phone to MARY, handing it to her. MARY stands, greets the caller and then brightens into a huge smile, as she walks to the opposite end of the room, as if to indicate she wanted some privacy. MAMA leans in to whisper in MAYE's ear.

MAMA

Who is Herman Griffin? And what happened to Wilson?

MAYE

Wilson's down south, you know, on the chitlin' circuit. Motown assigned Herman to her, but she really likes him. Mary says Herman reminds her of Jackie Wilson. He sings, dances really good, and he even writes songs.

MAMA

Assigned to her? What does that mean? And when they gonna pay her?

MAYE

Motown is run like a corporation. Plus, she's only 17 and they don't want to throw her to the wolves. Herman can be he valet, can look out for her and he can sing back up for her, even dance to her music.

MAMA

You didn't answer my other question.

MAYE

Oh, that, well she said they get paid every Friday just like every other business payroll does it.

MAMA raises her eyebrows, suddenly silent in thought, as though thinking about MARY's money, which MAYE finds a bit disconcerting as we see from her furrowed brows. MAMA picks up on it and quickly retorts.

MAMA

Oh, now, don't you go misinterpreting that. Mary needs family to look out for her financial interests in that business. She doesn't know Herman and he doesn't know her. You can't trust strangers with your hard-earned money.

MAYE

Mmmm. Uh-huh.

We hear MARY laughing, picking up on Maye's mistrust. The two women look at each other.

INT. THEATER- NIGHT. ONSTAGE

Mary, wearing a shimmering light blue evening gown, donning a bouffant wig, and adorned with dangling earrings with matching necklace and bracelets, is on stage singing and dancing to *Bye Bye Baby*, her band feeling it as well. While a dapper, well-dressed young man, HERMAN GRIFFIN is dancing behind her, performing somersaults, flips and splits. The audience is reacting with wild enthusiasm. MARY encourages the audience verbally. She holds the microphone out to the audience.

MARY
PAR-TAY! PAR-TAY!

The audience sings along, dances, as the theater is literally rocking. The security staff looks a bit concerned, until they start bobbing their heads, swaying to the music just a bit. When the manager observes his staff reacting so inappropriately, they straighten.

The song finishes. MARY and her band hurry to leave the stage as the next act is the popular Motown group The Miracles. She passes SMOKEY ROBINSON standing next to his lead singer

SMOKEY
Mary, I didn't get a chance to
introduce myself earlier. I'm
Smokey Robinson and this is my wife
Claudette who is also The Miracles
lead singer.

CLAUDETTE smiles and squeezes MARY's hand, while SMOKEY places a hand on her shoulder.

CLAUDETTE
Mary, honey, you are terrific!

SMOKEY
I remember when you sang this for
Berry. As good as you were that
day, it sounds even better, now.

MARY is gushing with pride and gratitude for their comments.

She feels on top of the world. Realizing they are about to go onstage, she quickly hugs each.

MARY
Thank-you both. That means
everything to me.

She scampers off stage. SMOKEY calls after her.

SMOKEY

See you at the office!

As MARY smiles, waves at them and departs, he whispers in confidence to his wife.

SMOKEY (CONT'D)

Berry asked me to write some material for that girl. She got pipes, but you know she's no songwriter.

CLAUDETTE nods her head in understanding, not necessarily agreement with her husband's assessment of MARY.

SMOKEY (CONT'D)

Berry said, 'You're gonna love working with Mary. She's Miss Personality. Bring out her sparkle, Smokey.'

CLAUDETTE

Oh, now that's poetry in motion, honey.

She hugs him as they both chuckle at her insinuation of Mary's flirtatious singing style.

EXT. DETROIT STREET-RESIDENTIAL NEIGHBORHOOD-NIGHT.

MARY and HERMAN GRIFFIN in the front seat of his clean, shiny, red Thunderbird convertible, with pristine white interior, scrubbed wheels and hubcaps. The car radio is playing a soft blues song. The two entertainers are passionately "necking," before MARY comes up for air. She sits up straight and fans herself, giggling. HERMAN joins in the laughter.

HERMAN GRIFFIN

So, Mary, be honest girl. You like me for my pretty car?

She shakes her head, laughing.

MARY

Oh, no, Herman. You see, I'm a sucker for a fancy dancer.

HERMAN GRIFFIN

Uh-huh. What else you a sucker for?

He inches closer to her, kissing her neck, her earlobe and cheek.

MARY

Well, now, you just gonna have to figure that one out for yourself, Mr. Griffin.

INT. DETROIT COURTHOUSE MORNING

Letting on the glass portion of a large wooden door reads "MARRIAGE LICENSE, JUSTICE OF THE PEACE." We see MARY and HERMAN holding hands and exchanging wedding vows. As they leave the courthouse, MAYE, MAMA, miscellaneous family are throwing rice at the couple, who hug them good-bye before departing into an appropriately decorated car. MAMA looks concerned, and MAYE puts a comforting arm around her.

MAYE

Cheer up! She's happy. And he'll take good care of her.

MAMA shoots her a dagger of a glance, not believing that statement for a minute.

GENEVA

Girl, please! She don't know that man. But I do.

MAYE looks suddenly concerned for her friend. They are both silent.

EXT. HIGHWAY. NIGHT

MARY, and the other Motown acts on a bus rolling down a highway in the middle of nowhere. We see an expanse of lone gas stations, occasional 7-11s, roadside produce stands, covered up for nighttime.

INT. TOUR BUS

Motown acts laughing, talking, a few are singing. Some of the men are playing cards. Several bottles of booze are being passed around and poured into paper cups.

A bag of potato chips falls onto the floor in front of MARY.

She retrieves it and hands it to LITTLE STEVIE WONDER a young, blind boy of 12, sitting in front of her. He smiles in appreciation of her kindness. Suddenly he stands up and motions for her to move over and let him sit beside her.

She obliges. He extends his hand to greet her.

STEVIE WONDER
I'm Stevie Wonder. And that was
nice of you, by the way.

MARY smiles, extends her hand to lightly shake his. She feels
a bit like a big sister and a mother to him.

MARY
Mary Wells.

STEVIE WONDER
Yes, I know.

He begins to sing a few bars of *Bye Bye Baby*, as she laughs.

STEVIE WONDER (CONT'D)
Hey, where are we? Do you know.

She takes one of his potato chips, smiling playfully.

MARY
Well...we are on a bus...on a
highway...

They both laugh.

STEVIE WONDER
No, I 'm serious. What city are we
in? I like to know where I'm going
and where I've been.

MARY
Well, Stevie, you done come to the
wrong person for that.

She takes a paper cup and a bottle of wine from one of the
Miracles, pours herself a drink, hands the bottle back with a
smile and a nod.

MARY (CONT'D)
I don't know where the hell we are.
I haven't known for days. I never
drink, but I'm bored with the
sameness of the road. Every town
looks the same.

STEVIE nods his understanding. His brows furrow in curiosity.

STEVIE WONDER
I wish I knew what one of them
looked like. I wish I knew what
nighttime looked like, let alone
the day.

There is a moment of silence as she feels wistful about his comments. Assuredly, she grabs his forearm momentarily. She points his fingers to the darkened skies outside the bus window.

MARY

Stevie, it is dark outside, just what you see. But in the distance...in the distance, are tiny specks of light called stars. Probably other planets we don't even know about yet. And circling ever so slowly around our planet earth is this great, beautiful bright moon. We only see it in different phases, and tonight...tonight, it's half full.

STEVIE looks momentarily stunned.

STEVIE WONDER

Wow! Wow! Were you a science teacher or something?

MARY

No, I just love science. I would have been a doctor if I didn't love singing so much.

STEVIE WONDER

A doc...oh, c'mon! You puttin' me on, now!

MARY

Nope. I love science and I'm fascinated by medicine. When I was a little girl, I nearly died of spinal meningitis and couldn't hear in my left ear or even walk right for two years.

STEVIE moves suddenly close to MARY attempting to kiss her.

She immediately pushes him away, laughing, yet is annoyed by his antics.

MARY (CONT'D)

Damn, boy! Take your fresh little Chihuahua self to your seat. Let me have my wine in peace.

She sits with her feet up on the seat next to her, swigging her wine, shaking her head at STEVIE, and laughing.

She spots DIANA ROSS walking up the aisle with a member of The Marvelettes, carrying a jar of pickled pigs' feet. The young woman motions an invitation to MARY to have one. She politely declines with a gesture and head shake, while smiling sweetly. DIANA sits directly behind her. Just as MARY takes another drink, she is jarringly jolted abruptly as DIANA puts her feet up, shaking the seat. MARY gathers herself, inhales to counter her angrier instincts as she turns around to smile at DIANA.

MARY (CONT'D)

Would you mind not pushing my seat
dear?

DIANA looks at her sideways, feigns sweetness, smiling like a Cheshire cat. Mary turns around. DIANA sticks her feet up again, this time with even greater force. MARY jumps up with a start.

MARY (CONT'D)

Now, look, you gap-toothed heifer!
Next time you put those size 23
clown feet anywhere near my seat
I'ma stick my cigarette out on them.

DIANA looks crestfallen, but only at MARY's description of her size.

DIANA ROSS

Heifer! I ain't no heifer! I'm a
size 0!

MARY bursts out laughing, belying her tipsiness. DIANA gets up and moves to another seat, as Mary keeps giggling.

INT. MUSIC STUDIO-DAY SUPER IMPOSE: "OCT. 1962."

MARY is donning headphones and SMOKEY ROBINSON is outside in the control room monitoring her.

SMOKEY

Mary, honey, I want you to think of
yourself as teasing your man just a
bit. This song is double entente.
The listener **thinks** you have two
lovers, but you are speaking of
only **one**, the same guy, **your** guy.
Tease the audience in the same way.
They are your *man*, get it?

MARY smiles, nods in understanding.

MARY

Oh, sure, Smokey. I get it now.

HERMAN is seen standing over the sound engineer barking orders. The engineer stands abruptly, throws down his headset and is soon standing beside SMOKEY, an exasperated look clearly discernible on his face. SMOKEY looks at the engineer and at HERMAN, before looking back at MARY, and shaking his head in visceral comprehension of her last statement. He then takes HERMAN by the coat sleeve and walks him out to the hallway for a chat. The engineer returns to the booth. MARY follows him to apologize. He waves her off with a smile. She is ostensibly embarrassed by HERMAN's overbearing behavior.

SMOKEY then returns sans HERMAN and soon MARY again sings *Two Lovers*.

SMOKEY

Okay so this is a bit of a send up,
a vamp. You don't really have two
lovers. It's one man, but he's got
two sides to him, see? But don't
let on till you get to the end.
Sound good?

Mary nods, smiling, appreciative of his cleverness. She puts the headphones on, as the engineer now cues her to start singing. All eyes are upon her. Mary appears confident.

MARY

"...Well I've got two lovers, and I
ain't ashamed. Two lovers, and I
love them both the same. Let me
tell you 'bout my first lover. He's
sweet and kind and he's mine all
mine. He treats me good like a
lover should and makes me love him.
I really, really love him. Oh, I
love him so. And I'll do everything
I can to let him know.

SMOKEY is smiling as he sees that MARY has heeded his advice on interpreting his song correctly and employing the appropriate body language and phrasing to render its meaning.

MARY (CONT'D)

Well, I've got two lovers and I
ain't ashamed. Two lovers and I
love them both the same. Let me
tell you 'bout my other lover. He
treats me bad, makes me sad. Makes
me cry, but still I can't deny,
that I love him. I really, really
love him. Oh, I love him so.

(MORE)

MARY (CONT'D)

*And I'll do everything I can to let
him know...*

MONTAGE of radio station DJs playing the song, early 60's white teen girls with bouffant flip hairstyles, shirtwaist dresses, and sneakers, dancing with crew-cut white boys wearing khaki slacks and madras shirts at school sock hops; on "American Bandstand," where we see black youngsters alongside white teens flooding the dance floor as they groove to the song. CLOSE-UP shots of Billboard Magazine touting "Two Lovers" as #1 on the R&B charts, #7 nationwide.

INT.-DAY GROSS POINTE, MICHIGAN

Geneva is mopping the floor of a middle-class white woman's kitchen, a transistor radio beside her playing "I'm Busted" by Ray Charles. She mindless hums along, until the song ends.

DJ

The great Ray Charles, everyone and
here's a brand-new tune by the
newest Motown rising star, Miss
Mary Wells, singing about her Two
Lovers!

Geneva jumps up and as if praising the Lord in harmony, sways to and fro. Just then her employer walks in, hands on hips.

GENEVA

Mrs. MacNeill, that's my baby girl
singing.

MRS. MACNEILL

Uh-huh. Well, I don't care if she's
your sister, mother or cousin. I
need this floor mopped before my
husband comes home.

Geneva stares at her momentarily, then, taking off her apron and latex gloves, hands them to the woman who just glares in anger at her before taking them.

GENEVA

Then you best be finishing it
yoself 'cause I'm going home to a
highly dignified stray cat who
shows me far more respect.

The woman watches in stunned disbelief as Geneva grabs her purse and hat and tosses her head back defiantly.

GENEVA (CONT'D)

Buh-bye.

As she departs out the kitchen door, Mrs. MacNeill continues to stare in disbelief. Geneva emits a shrill scream of delight as she dances and skips toward the bus stop.

WE SEE Billboard Magazine Headline close up of Mary's other song "You Beat Me to the Punch, a calypso tune by Smokey, "listed as #1 on R&B charts. MARY is lip-synching the song on Bandstand, while the kids dance.

MARY
(singing, as bongos pounce
along)
*"That day, I first saw you passing
by, I wanted to know your name, but
I was much too shy..."*

Another Billboard article highlights the emergence of girl groups on the pop charts. We also SEE SMOKEY ROBINSON writing, MARY testing out a few bars at a time, BERRY GORDY looking in and smiling.

INT. THEATRE. NIGHT STAGE SCENE OF A MULTI-ACT POP MUSIC SHOW

We hear a group called the Exciters singing the tail end of their hit *Tell Him*. In the wings we see MARY standing beside a group of female singers. SAM COOKE saunters by with Maye in tow and stops to introduce himself to Mary.

SAM COOKE
Hi Mary. I'm Sam Cooke. And I beat
you to the punch!

Both laugh heartily. Sam is all octane energy, brimming with charm.

SAM COOKE (CONT'D)
How's the tour going for you? They
treating you right?

MARY
No complaints here.

SAM COOKE
Mary, like my daddy would say, as
you travel down the road, just keep
your eyes on the horizon.

He winks before walking toward the wing, ready to take the stage as the Exciters wrap up their song. Mary and Maye look at one another with some bewilderment.

MARY

That was some cold-blooded advice
wrapped up in an enigma.

ARLENE

Hi, Mary. I'm Arlene Smith and
these are the Chantels.

Mary breaks into a huge grin of recognition. She begins to sing a few bars of their hit, *Maybe*.

MARY

*May-hey-be, if I cry every night,
you'll come back to meeeee*

The group breaks into spontaneous laughter and applause.

MARY (CONT'D)

I used to belt that song out while
I was scrubbing floors with my
mama, and she'd say, 'Hush, girl,
this is a white folks'
neighborhood.'

They again laugh in unison.

ARLENE

Girl, you can sing our song
anytime. We loved *Bye Bye Baby*. And
Two Lovers-how did you think of
that?

MARY

Oh, I didn't write that. Smokey
Robinson did. He writes my songs
now.

The group is suddenly quiet, a couple of them exchange knowing glances, and WE ARE left to guess why.

ARLENE hugs MARY warmly, as her singing group also comes forward to shake her hand. All the singers wear bouffant hair styles, chiffon dresses and high-heeled pumps, usually satin. MARY looks stunning in light blue satin dress with sequins, and matching pumps. She appears genuinely happy, smiling broadly, enjoying the camaraderie with the women.

INT. MOTOWN STUDIOS-DAY

Berry Gordy is talking to Smokey off in a corner as Mary enters the studio. Both men brighten

BERRY GORDY
There she is! How's my girl doin'
this morning?

She playfully curtsies, nodding at each.

MARY
Just fine, Mr. Gordy, Smokey.

As they chuckle, she slips between the two of them, and looks at each, first Smokey then Berry.

MARY (CONT'D)
So, wouldn't you agree that Smokey
outdid his bad self with *Operator*?

Smokey laughs. Berry remains serious.

BERRY GORDY
It's a..yeah, yeah, it's a good
song, alright.

Smokey and Mary exchange puzzled looks.

SMOKEY
You didn't like it? I mean, for my
money, Mary sang the hell out it.

Berry looks at both of them, walks over to a nearby chair, sits down. He takes a breath, straightens his tie, then slaps the table next to him.

BERRY
There's nothing wrong with it
except it hasn't got the right
hook.

Mary and Smokey appear stunned by his remark.

SMOKEY
So, you're trashing it?

Berry smirks. He shakes his head and stands up.

BERRY
Now you know better, Mr. Robinson,
sir. I don't waste money like that.
No, I'm putting it on the B side of
Two Lovers. Now that's one powerful
single, folks.

He prepares to exit, when Mary touches his sleeve.

MARY
Wait, Mr. Gordy...

He turns and stops to listen to he momentarily yet seeming impatient.

BERRY
Call me Berry, please. Makes me
feel like I'm an old man!

MARY
Ok, Berry. *Operator* is a great
song. I'd buy it if I were just a
teenager girl listening to the
radio like I used to do.

BERRY
But you're not that teenage girl,
anymore, darlin.' You collaborate
with Smokey and you're naturally
biased, thinking everything he
writes is your next #1 hit. It just
isn't.

He quickly departs. Mary throws up her arms to the skies.

MARY
Can you believe that? I mean, damn!
The stubbornness of that man!
(voice rising in annoyance
but not full-blown anger)
And why didn't you jump in there
and defend your own damn song,
Smokey?

SMOKEY
Because I've known him longer,
Mary, and I've learned that once he
has his mind made up about
something he's mud stuck like a
Billy goat in a rain-soaked ditch.

Mary stares at him for a moment. Then she breaks into a
slight smile.

MARY
How in God's name do you do that?

SMOKEY
Do what?

MARY
Come up with imagery like that,
even in a crisis?

Smokey laughs. He puts his arm around Mary.

SMOKEY

Claudette says the same thing. A gift from God above, I guess.

MARY

I just wish he'd listen to me one time. I know I'm right about that song.

SMOKEY

Mary, honey, listen. He does not call all the shots. In this business distributors decide what they will promote and what they won't promote. They have to send their A & R guys to the deejays, spend a lot of upfront money. You're still a rising star. Give it time.

MARY

Understood. But I know I'm right as rain about that song.

SMOKEY

Ah, ha! Now you're doing it too!

DAYS LATER-INT. RESTAURANT- MID DAY

MARY is having lunch with MAYE. They are sipping wine and in general enjoying themselves. The waiter sets down their entrees and departs. MAYE waits for MARY to take a bite of food before she suddenly grows serious in tone, leaning forward to talk quietly with her friend.

MAYE

Honey, how are things with Herman?

MARY takes another bite, sets her fork down, and looks warily at MAYE.

MARY

I just got off the road a few days ago, haven't seen him much. He's been working, too. Why?

MAYE is being cautious, deliberate.

MAYE

Did you go to the Motown distributor's party Friday night?

MARY

No, no I was at home. Just happily enjoying a bubble bath, catching up on the news, doing my nails. Herman went for both of us, though. Came home and said I hadn't missed anything.

MAYE

Oh, girl, you done missed something, all right.

There is a moment where both friends share a visual exchange that tells MARY all she needs to know. MAYE nevertheless leans in closer and whispers discreetly.

MAYE (CONT'D)

Sweetheart, your man was upstairs in a bedroom with a party girl.

MARY

A party girl? What do you mean a party girl?

MAYE

Those record company distributors hire call girls. They use them to make deals, get things signed. Hear me? Herman can't seem to get his songs promoted, so his distributor had this girl who rode in with him in the limo, you know, back seat work, understand me? Herman paid her, then batted clean up, girl.

MARY is stunned. Speechless momentarily, she then gathers herself and becomes concerned.

MARY

Did anyone else besides your friend see him?

MAYE

EVERYONE saw him!

MARY

That sonofabitch! I've wondered where he's been nights, didn't call me on the road, hasn't been home since. That sonofabitch!

MAYE

And I am sorry to pile on, but...as
the commercial says, but wait
there's more.
Mary, look.

She digs into her purse and pulls out a legal-sized envelope
stuffed with various receipts. MARY looks through them yet
doesn't understand MAYE's concern.

MARY

It looks like you have everything
in order...

MAYE

No, honey, look at what's missing.
None of these receipts are from
Herman. That man keeps forgetting
to get receipts and he's still
charging us for gas, car repairs,
singer's fees, musician union
dues...

MARY suddenly is astonished and then angry. She shakes her
head, disgusted.

MAYE (CONT'D)

You gotta get yourself a new
manager. He's no agent. He's no
manager. Girl, you in the big time
now. Let Esther Gordy manage you.

Mary blows out a large smoke ring. Sits silently for a
moment. Then brightening...

MARY

(singing)

*Mama didn't lie, she didn't lie,
Mama didn't lie..*

INT. NIGHT.

MARY AND Herman's apartment. MARY is confronting HERMAN over
MAYE's reports.

HERMAN GRIFFIN

Oh, baby you're gonna believe some
bullshit by some jealous
wallflowers at a party? I thought
you were smarter than that.

MARY

Don't try to spin this around on me, Herman! You humiliated me in front of everyone at Motown. Everybody saw you with that whore! Everybody!

HERMAN is silent as he realizes there is nothing he can say to dissuade his wife that his lies hold merit. His mood suddenly morphs into arrogance and belittlement.

HERMAN GRIFFIN

Okay, so what the hell do you want? I'm a man. I ain't no eunuch. When pussy is there this cat growls. Anyway, I don't know what you're up to on those tours, baby but I can guess.

MARY is now incensed. She picks up his shoes nearby and throws one at him, then another.

MARY

Get the hell out! Get out! We are done!

MARY (CONT'D)

I put up with your bullying, your lies long enough. Get out! Now!

MARY picks up his hat and coat and upon opening the apartment door throws them out into the hallway. He goes to retrieve them, and she closes the door, yet he fights to get back inside, slamming the door on her finger. She screams in pain, causing several neighbors to poke their heads out of their doors. HERMAN angrily and abruptly leaves in a huff. MARY exhales a sigh of relief yet tears stream down her face.

END ACT I

ACT TWO

WEEKS LATER. INT. MARY'S NEW APARTMENT. NIGHT.

MARY is hammering nails into the wall upon which to hang some artwork. We see some boxes in the background and hear "The Adventures of Ozzie and Harriet" emanating from the television. She stops suddenly as if in sudden thought. MARY gets up and walks into the kitchen where she stops before the yellow wall phone. She dials, and as she waits for an answer, we see a sudden smile break across her face.

MARY

Hey, Maye-Maye, get yo bad self over here, girl... Well, take your babydolls off and put your high heeled sneakers on and walk like a man.

(laughing)

I have to talk to you. It's important.

She returns to her task, surveying whether the frame is straight. It is not and she laughs aloud, before straightening it.

MAYE and MARY are seated in the living room across from one another, MAYE on the sofa, MARY on the love seat, talking, the lamplight shadowing their faces.

MAYE

So, I was thrilled when you asked Esther Gordy to let me be your PA, but now you're saying you want me to come on this Motown road trip with you AND handle the money business? What about Geneva?

MARY shakes her head vehemently.

MARY

No. Uh-uh. Maye, you know she's all about my supporting her now. I don't even know where my last check went. Things are sketchy.

Maye looks baffled and concerned simultaneously.

No, this way I not only have someone I trust making those decisions, so I can focus on performing, but I got my best friend with me!

(MORE)

MARY (CONT'D)

Oh, Maye, we'll have fun! We'll be with the girls from The Marvelettes. You know, Kathryn, Juanita...

MAYE

Yes, they're cool. Diana?

MARY rolls her eyes playfully, laughing.

MARY

And Blondie...and Mary...and Sam Cooke.

MAYE

Oh, he's so nice. Oh...Ok, ok, I'm on board.

MARY

I knew you would! Oh, Maye, we gonna have us a ball!

TIME PASSES. They are sprawled across the separate sofas, MARY smoking a cigarette, blowing smoke rings, each sipping wine.

MAYE

Girl, you should cut that shit out.

MARY

What? Drinking? You know I don't usually drink. And I never touch that funny stuff David puts up his nose.

MAYE

David, wha...no! I mean you're smoking! How can a singer smoke all the time like you do and have such a good voice? That shit's gonna catch up with you one day.

MARY waves her off, laughing good-naturedly. She turns wistful.

MARY

You know what Maye? You're lucky you had religion growing up.

MAYE

Why do you say that Mar'? You sang in church.

MARY

Only 'cause my uncle was the minister and he wanted me there. But when I came home, Mama never talked about God or read me any Bible stories. I never thought about sin or heaven or...

They look at each other and just start laughing because they are a bit tipsy.

MAYE

All you gotta know about sin is everybody does it, but nobody ever thinks they goin' to hell. It's always..." When I get to heaven I'm gonna find Grandma."

MARY

Grandma! Shit, when I get to heaven, I'll be looking for some fine man who died young!

The girls are laughing, MARY with a loud, deep laugh.

MARY (CONT'D)

Well, heck, they can't demote you once you make it up there! Got nothing to lose, right?!

More laughter. It is apparent these two are very close.

MAYE

You still seeing David Ruffin, then?

MARY

(shaking her head)
He's such a sweet, sweet man. And he's crazy about me.

MAYE

So, what's the problem, then?

MARY shrugs, dispassionately.

MARY

The timing is just all wrong Mae-Mae. I just got out of a marriage; I want to simply focus on my career and not get into anything deep right now.

(MORE)

MARY (CONT'D)

Smokey's writing some new material
I'll be cutting after the tour. But
David and I will always be friends.

MAYE

Poor David.

MARY

(with mock chagrin)
What? Poor David, nothing! That
studhorse has phillies lined up
outside his dressing room door
stretching down the block! He goes
through whores like a fat woman
with a box of truffles.

They laugh again. Maye takes a sip of her drink, looks at Mary.

MAYE

Mary, you know you won't be single
for long. You the kind that likes
having a man around.

MARY

You know me pretty well. When I'm
alone, I feel lost. Like I'm
floating in the middle of sea. I
guess we all need an anchor in this
lonely world.

MAYE

(wistfully)

Yeah, girl. I know that's right.

MARY

(brightening)

And you know what else, Maye?
Someday I wanna have me a whole
bunch of babies.

MAYE

Whoooh! Lord, Jesus! A whole bunch
of babies!

She pretends to fan herself, swoon and faint, while MARY
giggles at her antics, playfully throws a pillow at her.

EXT. DETROIT THEATRE MARQUEE ESTABLISHING -NIGHT

"Sam Cooke, The Temptations, The Four Tops, The Marvelettes,
the Supremes, Barrett Strong, The Miracles, Marvin Gaye, and
Mary Wells."

INT. DRESSING ROOM-NIGHT

Busy, bustling, noisy, atmosphere as singers and their assistants are primping, singing, walking across the room to joke around with one another, some pouring a drink or eating a snack. Offstage we hear Barrett Strong singing his signature tune *Money*.

Just give me mo-o-ney
That's what I want.."

LEVI STUBBS of the Four Tops walks past MARY, who is seated in a chair as MAYE fixes her hair. He joins the other members of his group, and they practice just a few bars of a song. The Miracles leave for the staging area, as SMOKEY pats MAYE on the shoulder. It is momentarily quieter. MAYE then finishes MARY's hair. MARY stands and as she does DIANA ROSS walks into the room, drink in hand, playing the diva, smiling at everyone and no one. She spots MARY, their eyes meet. MAYE smiles her sweet smile. DIANA looks at MARY up and down, and MAYE stops what she was doing to watch.

DIANA
You look lovely, Mary,

MARY (WARILY)
Thank-you, Diane, and you as well.

DIANA
So...where'd you get that dress?
And how much you pay for it?

The Four Tops stop in their track, expecting fireworks between these two. The room is dead quiet. MARY acts non-plussed. She continues to smile at DIANA. She then turns to look at MAYE and bursts into laughter, not falling for DIANA's trap. MAYE laughs with her.

LEVI and the others laugh, too. DIANA looks sideways at them, shaking her head, before going off to join MARVIN who is alone in the corner of the room reading. MARY with MAYE in tow leaves for the stage, just as SAM COOKE enters the dressing room. He pecks MARY on the cheek, as she rushes off.

SAM COOKE
Hey Maye, you're looking so very
fine tonight, girl.

MAYE
Thank-you Sam. You're so sweet.

Just then he leans in to whisper something in her ear. What he is saying jokingly is "I want to fuck you!" But the audience only hears "I want to...".

MAYE bursts out laughing, as she takes it as SAM's sense of humor, and continues to follow MARY to the backstage area. She sees several of the MARVELETTES and they hug each other.

MARY

Hi Kathryn!

KATHRYN

Mary, that mic is turned low, you gotta belt it a bit.

MARY

So much for a sound check! Good Lord!

EMCEE

Ladies and gentlemen, here she is!
The First Lady of
Motown...Miss...Mary... Wells!
Let's hear it for her!

ON STAGE

Mary holds the mic. She is breathtakingly beautiful in a lavender spring-floral sheath with matching silk pumps, her hair in a tall French twist. Audience erupts into thunderous applause. Upon the first drumbeats they gyrate, snap their fingers, clap in time; the usual raucous crowd response.

MARY

(over the drumbeats)
Chicago! I'm so happy to see you!
In fact, I am ...
(she whispers audibly into
the mic)
The One Who Really Loves You.

Thunderous applause in recognition of the song. As the band plays the song's intro, the crowd claps in time.

*"Some other girls are filling your
head with jive,
So now you're acting like you don't
know that I'm alive
Love, you better wake up
Yeah before we break up
And you lose me, little me
The one who really loves you...*

Mary walks, first left, then, right to the music. She is very animated, singing to different men in the first row, shrugging her shoulders and swaying her hips. Other singers watch her from the wings. She is wagging her finger playfully at the audience, shaking her head in time with the music,

MAYE is seated at a small desk in the dressing room disbursing money to several musicians and others, before getting up to watch MARY from the wings. They focus on MARY's performance.

MARY (CONT'D)
*So love you better wake up
 Yeah before we break up
 And you lose me, little me
 The one who really loves you
 (I really love you, yeah-yeah-yeah).*

The band is tight, a back-up group sings the chorus, and the scene is one of splendid reverie, as she is totally connected with the audience.

WE FEEL part of a party scene. WE FOLLOW the performance to its climax, and MARY to her dressing room, where the entourage celebrates with champagne, hard liquor and some weed being smoked outside in the alleyway. SAM COOKE enters, scrunching his nose and waving away the marijuana smoke which makes MARY and MAYE giggle.

SAM COOKE
 That shit is vile. Man!

MARY
 Oh, it ain't so bad, Sam. I tried it. You must've tried, c'mon!

SAM COOKE
 Oh, hell no! Give me my bottle of Jack and I'm good. Yeah!

He laughs as MAYE quizzically looks at MARY.

MAYE
 Wait, Mary, you smoked marijuana?

MARY
 Girl, please. Ain't no thing.

Just then several young men enter the room, three heading for the sandwich table, and two electing to stand behind SAM.

One is tall and bulky, seeming exuding confidence, while the other is bespectacled and shy. He looks in awe at MARY, who catches his glance and smiles at him, causing him to become embarrassed. She takes a long drag of her cigarette, continuing to smile at the young man.

MARY (CONT'D)
 Who are your friends, Sam?

SAM COOKE

I was just going to introduce you ladies to these gentlemen. They are all brothers, from Cleveland, heir daddy is a minister at Faith Baptist Church. They are part of a new crossover group I produce known as The Valentinos. This is Cecil and behind him is the very quiet but sweet-voiced Curtis. Over there chowing down are June, Harry, and Bobby.

MARY and MAYE extend their hands. CURTIS' hand appears to be shaking, while he audaciously kisses MARY's hand, which makes her viscerally stunned for a brief moment. They make eye contact before she looks away shyly.

MARY

Explain crossover, Sam.

SAM COOKE

These fellas were gospel singers, but we both know, Mary, there is no money in gospel. The money is in popular music. In rock 'roll, in standards. So, I convinced their daddy that they were talented enough to make that jump.

CURTIS and MARY keep eyeing one another, but when MARY looks at CURTIS, he looks away for just a moment in shyness. When he returns his gaze upon her, she is still looking in his direction. He is a bit starstruck. Just then a candle-lit birthday cake is brought in by MAYE. They are led by SAM COOKE singing "Happy Birthday" to MARY.

SAM COOKE (CONT'D)

C'mon, everyone!

(singing, soulfully)

Happy birthday to you,

Happy birthday to you,

*Happy birthday Mary Queen of
Motown,*

Happy birthday to you!

The dressing room is totally packed with entertainers, many not even on the bill, and many white singers that resemble Jimmy Clanton, Bobby Rydell, Frankie Avalon. There is champagne flowing, though we never see MARY drink.

CURTIS still hasn't had the nerve to talk to MARY, who continues to smile sweetly at him. MAYE catches their connectivity, raising an eyebrow.

BERRY, meanwhile, is standing with his arm around Diane's waist as he reaches over to the table, handing her a piece of cake. She smiles back. MARY sees this, wears a quizzical expression, unsure of how to respond.

As some autograph-seeking fans approach SAM, MARY decides it is time to cut out. She kisses SAM on the cheek, squeezes the Womack brothers' hands, before signaling with her head and eye contact to MAYE that she wishes to leave.

MAYE immediately motions security over to get the car in the alleyway.

As they move outside, bidding rushed farewells to the other musicians she is stopped by a throng of autograph seekers.

She obliges each and every one, much to MAYE's consternation.

MAYE

Jesus, Mary, we'll be here all night. Look...more are coming.

MARY shrugs. She smiles as she hands the autographs back quickly and eventually follows MAYE to the back seat of the company car.

MAYE (CONT'D)

You know your problem? You're too nice. You can't be so sweet to everybody.

MARY

Oh, trust me, Maye, I'm not.

MAYE

No, I mean it. You fall in love with everyone who smiles back at you, but you miss the nodding and winking when you turn around.

MARY

I know you can't mean Curtis.

MAYE

Not specifically...Look, honey, all I'm saying is just check the temperature before you dive into the water headfirst.

Mary is at first taken aback by Maye's comment, then becomes reflective, staring out the window at the city sidewalks as they whiz past. Maye playfully taps her on the shoulder with a playbill.

MAYE (CONT'D)
 Oh, c'mon now, it ain't all that
 serious, girl.

MARY
 (a sly smile creeping
 across her face as she
 leans forward, whispering
 so that the driver can't
 hear her)
 Oh, but it just might be, Maye-
 Maye. He is sooo fine!

They both crack up laughing.

MARY (CONT'D)
 (emitting a long sigh)

MAYE
 What?

MARY
 I think he has a girlfriend.

Maye shakes her head in disappointment, then gives her friend
 a tight hug.

"AUGUST, 1963" INT. NIGHT, L.A. PALM TREES OUTSIDE POSH HOTEL.

WE SEE MAYE walking through the hotel lobby getting some
 cigarettes out of the vending machine. It is dark, smokey,
 hazy. She passes the bar, considering whether to have a
 drink.

She spots her friend SAM COOKE alone in a corner spot of the
 bar. MAYE begins to smile and raise her hand in recognition,
 until realizing he appears distraught. His head is down in
 forlorn sadness. His cigarette seems like an afterthought.
 Her facial expression is one of pathos as she decides to
 leave him alone with his thoughts. As MAYE discreetly
 departs, she does not see the cover of *Jet Magazine* on a rack
 against the wall, the photo of a toddler, and adjacent story
 on the drowning death of Sam Cooke's 18-month-old son,
 Vincent.

INT. MOTOWN STUDIOS-DAY

A woman we do not recognize is showing Mary her teeth and
 tongue as they are working on her diction. Across the room
 The Four Tops are collaborating.

"BRIAN HOLLAND" OF THE FAMED MOTOWN HOLLAND DOZIER HOLLAND
SONGWRITING TEAM...

In a corner donning a light suit and tie, sits Brian Holland,
a tall black man with short, cropped hair,

BERRY enters the room, congenially smiles at everyone.

BERRY GORDY
How's my family doing this lovely
morning?

They all respond in unison.

ALL
Fine!

BERRY GORDY
Cool, cool

Diane has exited the room, Berry follows her. Mary 's brow
furrows temporarily. BERRY then opens the door a moment
later. All but one of others leaves, and the one remaining,
BRIAN HOLLAND gets up and walks over to MARY and the lady,
who seems pleased with MARY's progress, as she, too prepares
to depart, until BERRY signals for her to meet with him. They
are off in a corner, locked in discussion, before Berry
leaves the room for good.

BRIAN
Mary, I've got a song idea for you.
Let's work on it together, all
right?

MARY seems surprised but smiles sweetly. She nods.

BRIAN (CONT'D)
I know you are used to Smokey, but
Berry likes to rotate us
songwriters from time to time.

MARY
Well, I love Smokey, but I'm open
to working with just about anyone
who wants to write us both a hit.

Brian begins twinkling the ivories. He is tinkering with a
melody, then lights a cigarette, gives it to MARY, lights
another for himself.

BRIAN
You know, Mary, Smokey just adores
you, loves working with you.
(MORE)

BRIAN (CONT'D)
He calls you 'wonderful' to
collaborate with.

MARY
Oh, we have us a ball, Brian! I
just meant...

BRIAN
I know. It happens. It has happened
to me, so I'm hip to writing deep
freezes and mirages. You think you
have a sure-fire #1 with a bullet,
turns out to be a cellar-dweller.
(pauses)
Okay, Miss Wonderful One, dig...

He shifts gears as he sings...

BRIAN (CONT'D)
*You lost the sweetest boy that you
had that time The sweetest boy that
you had... That there's the chorus.
Here's the intro line. You had the
sweetest boy in the world Without a
doubt you were the envy of every
girl You're the kind...you're the
kind...the kind...*

MARY
You're the kind who's never
satisfied...

BRIAN smiles, looking at her as he writes that line down.

BRIAN
You want boys to...You want
boys...you want...

MARY
You want every boy

BRIAN
You want every boy to pass you
by...

BRIAN throws his head back laughing. He writes that line in,
too. He and MARY lock eyes.

BRIAN (CONT'D)
Wonderful!

MARY laughs, gets a devilish look in her eye as she seeks to
imitate the iconic Austrian TV bandleader Lawrence Welk.

MARY
Wunerful-a-wunerful.

BRIAN
(laughing)
Bring on the champagne bubbles!

MARY
Oh hell, just bring on the
champagne!

Their laughter rings out in the studio, as the camera recedes slowly. We see them in the studio, hear the song, watch her long arms wrap loosely, playfully around his neck as he plays the piano, and she sings.

INT. COFFEE SHOP.

MAYE and MARY are having a quick lunch of a sandwich and coffee. MARY hasn't finished her sandwich before she is lighting up a cigarette. The waitress pours more coffee.

MARY
There's some funny business going
on.

MAYE
How so?

She takes a long drag on her cigarette. Leans in toward Maye.

MARY
I don't know, but I'm-a find out.

MAYE
(sotto voce)
Is money involved?

Mary nods affirmatively.

MARY
Mmmm-a whole lot of it.

MAYE
(still hushed)
Songwriters come first. Ask Smokey
what he knows.

ESTABLISHING NIGHTCLUB. FAMILIAR MARQUEE SIGN READS APOLLO THEATER." IT LISTS ALL THE ACTS WHICH INCLUDE MARY, MARVIN GAYE, BRENDA HOLLOWAY, THE FOUR TOPS, TEMPTATIONS, SUPREMES.

MARY is on stage; the backup groups are now The Temptations and Supremes. She is continuing to sing the second verse of *You've Lost the Sweetest Boy*. The crowd is insanely delirious with joy. The band is even tighter, the kids are dancing in the aisles, and MARY is using every muscle in her body to wring out every note of the song. She playfully wags her finger at girls in the front row, who are delighted. She winks at the boys. It is a highly charged lovefest.

The group takes their bows upon finishing, and the crowd is on their feet. Finally, the emcee comes out as they exit off stage behind the falling curtain.

MARVIN GAYE is straightening his bowtie. MARY hugs him and he showers her with compliments.

MARVIN GAYE

We need to get together in studio
one of these days. We'd sound
really good together, Mary.

MARY

Well, you know the head of our
"family" decides those things,
Marvin. I like the idea, though. I
do.

MARVIN GAYE

Don't you worry, I'll talk to
Berry. We'll get it done,
sweetheart.

EMCEE

Ladies and gentlemen, without
further ado, here's Mr. Marvin
Gaye!

Marvin runs out onto the stage to warm applause. The girls appear to swoon over his good looks and charming smile. The band begins to play.

MARVIN GAYE

Thank-you, thank-you. Here is a new
tune. Hope y'all like it. You are
so wonderful... You're a wonderful
one!

MARY, offstage watching him for a moment is startled as she realizes BRIAN wrote the song with the exact words that he used to describe her. She shakes her head in awe.

MAYE

What?

MARY just starts laughing. She grabs MAYE.

MARY

C'mon. We have to get out of here.

As they are departing, SMOKEY is standing at the alley door.

He is smiling broadly at MARY.

SMOKEY

Hey, Mary, we are on a roll, girl!
Ha ha! I'm gonna write you another
hit song very soon.

MARY looks at MAYE. They exchange smiles

SMOKEY (CONT'D)

And this time I will get Berry's
commitment on the A & B sides up
front.

MARY

He listens to you, Smokey. Not sure
he cares what little ol' Mary has
to say.

Smokey is about to say something in response when another
singer saunters up to them.

MARY (CONT'D)

Well if it isn't the lovely Miss
Brenda Holloway!

BRENDA HOLLOWAY hugs MARY, then Smokey, yet facing Mary as
she jokingly chastises Smokey.

BRENDA HOLLOWAY

I know that's right! You give him
hell, honey!

She turns to look directly at SMOKEY.

BRENDA HOLLOWAY (CONT'D)

Whether you realize it or not,
Smokey, Mary Wells is MISS Motown!
She's got more fans than all of us!
Hit or miss, this girl works hard!

SMOKEY

That she does, Brenda. Hey, Lamont
Dozier! My man!

Just then LAMONT DOZIER of the Four Tops strolls up to the gathered and begins singing BRENDA's hit to her face.

LAMONT DOZIER
*Every little bit hurts...
 Every night I cry, every night I
 sigh, every night I wonder why
 You treat me cold,
 Yet you won't let me go...*

By now EDDIE Holland is standing there. He leans in just as LAMONT finishes the verse.

EDDIE HOLLAND
 That's cuz you ugly.

As the group erupts in laughter, MARY and MAYE non-verbally communicate their need to leave. They scurry out the door past SMOKEY and as they are close to the car, a hysterical crowd has suddenly enveloped MARY. MAYE becomes panicked, as she tries to get to her friend. MARY smiles at the fans but is concerned. MAYE with help from the uniformed driver who has briefly exited the vehicle, pull MARY to safety and drive off. MARY appears stunned.

MARY
 What the hell was that all about?

MAYE smiles at her friend, tidying her wig just a bit.

MAYE
 Like the lady said, you are now
 MISS MOTOWN!

MARY looks quizzically at MAYE.

MARY
 Now how can I be Miss Motown when I
 have yet to have a number one
 record anywhere? I'm not there yet,
 sweetheart.

MAYE starts to chuckle.

MAYE
 Honey, honey, you ARE there! You
 are the most popular act in this
 company! Just be patient, it's
 coming. In fact, someday you gonna
 be headlining in Vegas, girl.

MARY
 Vegas! What?

MAYE

No, honest, you will. I just feel
it in my bones.

MARY looks out the car window at the rainy New York night.

She is wistful, dreamily pondering MAYE's last statement.

MARY

Vegas. Little Mary Esther Wells
headlining in Las Vegas. Imagine
Johnnie Mae's face when she reads
about that in the Detroit papers!

MARY begins pantomiming an imitation of JOHNNIE MAE...

MARY (CONT'D)

You best be runnin' along little
Mary. Ain't no one looking for a
girl singer in this here studio. Go
on home to scrub your mama's cold
floors.

She and Maye bust up laughing.

INT. MARY'S APARTMENT

MARY is in bed with a man we do not recognize as anybody in
the music business. She smiles starry-eyed at him. He smiles
yet we sense his distance which she does not pick up on.

Outside the window in the clear deep blue sky there is a full
moon. We hear the beginnings of *My Guy* being written...

INT MOTOWN STUDIO

MARY and SMOKEY working on a new song. She sings a line; he
writes in a change or two. MARY seems exceptionally happy, a
lightness enveloping her essence. She is swaying to the tune
as she hums it.

FOGGY DREAM-LIKE SEQUENCE

EXT. DOWNTOWN DETROIT STREET-A SATURDAY NIGHT.

An image of MARY and her mystery lover, (Benny) happily
strolling hand-in-hand down the street past curious on-
lookers, sharing an ice cream sundae, laughing, kissing,
snuggling...

MARY

*No muscle-bound man can take my
hand from my guy No handsome face
can ever take the place of my guy.
He may not be a movie star, but
when it comes to being happy, we
are...*

SMOKEY seems momentarily perplexed.

SMOKEY

This man you been seeing...

MARY

Wait! How you know I been seeing
someone? You spying on me Smokey?

SMOKEY

Ha-ha. No, darling, I can just tell
because you're lit up like a
Hudson's Department Store Christmas
tree...and Christmas is long over
with. And then, you got them
faraway eyes...

He imitates her glassy-eyed, dreamy look. MARY giggles. She then nods as though she has been found out, caught, apprehended with the truth.

MARY

Okay, okay. His name is Benny and
he owns a barbershop...

SMOKEY

WHAT! A civilian?

MARY

Yes, a civilian. I don't
discriminate.

SMOKEY

I wish you luck, Mar,' but I don't
think...well, it's gonna be tough
when you travel and perform like
you do. He can't just leave his
business and jump on the bus with
you, y'know.

MARY shrugs. She elects not to respond to SMOKEY's concerns.

SMOKEY returns to playing the last few bars, seems a bit stuck.

SMOKEY (CONT'D)
*But when it comes to being happy,
 we are...we are...*

He looks at MARY. She smiles. He laughs.

SMOKEY (CONT'D)
 You best believe it, baby...

He plays the last verse again.

SMOKEY (CONT'D)
*You best be believin' I won't be
 deceivin' to my guy.*

MARY screams with delight, hugs SMOKEY. WE SEE them rehearse the song, as MARY's singing morphs into the hit record.

QUICK MONTAGE:

WE SEE her singing it at numerous venues, SEE kids dancing to it at high school sock hops across the country, SEE deejays playing the record, and finally SEE Billboard Magazine Pop and R&B charts have the song "My Guy"--MARY Wells" at #1 on both.

INT. MARY'S APRTMENT- EARLY EVENING

Mary, just out of the bathtub, dressed in a robe, her hair in a kerchief, is sitting at the kitchen table applying pink nail polish to her nails. Dr. Kildare is playing on TV. The wall telephone rings, she stops what she is doing and answers it with her free hand.

MARY
 Hello? Curtis Womack! How nice to hear from you! Well, I'm getting ready to go out, but I have a few minutes. Oh, you did? Sorry to hear that. Curt..have you been drinking?
 (laughing)
 No, no, you're entitled. God knows I've done my share of it! Oh, cool, when is your gig here? Ohh, wow, I'll be in England then. Yes, opening for the Beatles, can you dig that? Yeah, sure, ok. I'll see you when I get back then.

Mary stares into an abyss, a quizzical expression overtaking her countenance. She suddenly finds herself smiling but isn't sure just why.

EXT. HOLLYWOOD-VINE STREET -NIGHT

Theater marquee reads "STEVE ALLEN THEATER."

INT. THEATER- NIGHT. ONSTAGE

MARY is performing on stage.

Steve reacts with wild enthusiasm. CAMERAMAN PANS TO AUDIENCE where JOHN LENNON wearing a disguise is sitting in the audience completely enjoying her performance.

MARY and SMOKEY are feted with a party at the Motown offices. MAYE is there, beaming with pride at her friend. She sees SMOKEY take MARY by the hand and talk discreetly to her in a lone corner of the room. MARY, in response, looked crestfallen, tear-eyed. SMOKEY lends her his handkerchief; she dabs her eyes. He reassures her, rubs her back a bit, and returns with a plastic smile to the gathering. MARY, in turn, follows suit. MAYE grabs her arm.

MAYE

What's going on?

MARY

(Whispering)

They're skimming our copyright money and using it to bolster Diane's group, that's what. They never give me my due, Maye. They pick my brain, but they never give me any credit.

MAYE

What the hell..

MARY

Shhh! We'll talk later, on the way home.

She gently nudges Maye further away from the ears of prying people.

MARY (CONT'D)

Pretend everything's cool for now. Because--dig this-- I am about to tour with the Beatles! THE BEATLES! Okay? So, I don't want to rock that boat.

MAYE is visibly astonished by the news.

MAYE

The Beatles! The Beatles!

MARY starts snapping her fingers in front of MAYE's face, laughing.

MARY

Before I go, though, I am going to record with Marvin. Eddie wrote us a beautiful song. Plus, an album of duets.

MAYE

(eyes wide open)

Oh, you better be careful. Anna will have your hide if you so much as smile at her husband. That is one possessive woman. Ohh-wee!

MARY waves her off.

MARY

Girl, please! As fine-looking as he is, this is strictly business. We can both benefit from this. He's going to write me some songs, too. You know, he is really a smart guy. We were talking politics and he even loves science like I do. We were talking about the constellations and...

MAYE is looking down her nose in disbelief at MARY.

MARY (CONT'D)

What?

MAYE

Wait, you mean to tell me you and Marvin, sexy, hot, fine, fine Marvin, were talking science? Talk about wasted opportunity!

MARY

He's married! And you just said Anna don't take no mess.

MAYE

Yes, but a little flirting can't hurt.

MARY

A little...Maye! This is a business, not a barroom dance call.

(MORE)

MARY (CONT'D)

We both want to advance our careers. We want people to look at the album and THINK we are romantic, but we don't want to be romantic.

As MAYE smiles and nods in understanding, we hear the opening bars of *Once Upon a Time*.

INT. MOTOWN STUDIOS-TWILIGHT

CAMERA swings down and around; MARY is singing to MARVIN, as they closely face each other sharing one microphone. There is a small audience of Motown employees watching through the window, including BERRY GORDY and MARY's manager, ESTHER. JUXTAPOSED in the frame are cuts of MARY and BENNY being romantic, MARY going over song charts with MARVIN, receipts clothing, and wigs with MAYE, tour itineraries with ESTHER. MARY is definitely The First Lady of Motown.

MARY AND MARVIN

*Once upon a time
Almost lost my mind
I was lonely, so lonely
Once upon a time
Hoping everyday things would go my
way,
And then you came into my life
Now everything is fine.*

MARVIN GAYE

*I never knew,
What love could do
Til I met you
Now everything is oh so cozy...*

PHOTO SESSION

MAYE is combing MARY's hair and applying her makeup carefully. She has the new "mod" look of winged eyeliner, heavy mascara, gray shadow, and light pink lipstick. The LP cover features MARVIN and MARY in close proximity, staring into each other's eyes.

MARY AND MARVIN IN UNISON

*Now my skies are blue
All because of you
I'm so glad, I was lonely
Once upon a time*

There is a xylophone solo, bass...Mary is careful to keep her eyes on the sheet music. Marvin is watching her, waiting for his entrance...

MARY (CONT'D)

*I never knew
What love could do
Til I met you
Now everything is oh so cozy*

MARY AND MARVIN (CONT'D)

*Now my skies are blue
All because of you
I was lonely, once upon a time.
I was lonely, once upon
a time.
Oh, so lonely, once upon a time...*

MARY and MARVIN sing this in such a way as to convey the closeness of two people newly in love.

ENGINEER'S VOICE

(from the control room)

"OK, THAT'S A WRAP!"

The studio audience begins applauding enthusiastically. The two singers embrace in recognition of their satisfaction with the take. As they continue to grin, we see a very angry woman, presumably ANNA GORDY GAYE, break through the crowd of onlookers before tossing a shoe that lands atop Marvin's head. Stunned silence follows.

EXT. NIGHTTOME. BUSINESS DISTRICT OF DETROIT. LETTERING ON WINDOW READS "BENNY'S BARBERSHOP." IT IS FALL; LEAVES ARE BLOWING IN THE COOL MICHIGAN WINDS.

OS

MAYE V.O.

*If Mary had one flaw it was
allowing her heart to rule her
head. But once that bird flies out
of the cage, it's gone for good.*

WE HEAR the clip-clop of MARY's high heeled black leather boots on the cement. She is wearing a beautiful, black leather coat, with the hood loosely over her head, black leather gloves to match. She is wearing pink lipstick and black mascara, looks dressed to perfection.

She is happily smiling in anticipation of seeing her lover.

OS

WE HEAR her version of the Beales' song *Can't Buy Me Love*, a fast, jazzy riff...

MARY

*Can't buy me love, love,
Can't buy me love...
Buy you a diamond ring my friend
If it makes you feel alright
I'll get you anything my friend if
it makes you feel alright
I don't care too much for money
Money can't buy me love, no no, no,
no..*

MONTAGE:DOWNTOWN DETROIT STREET-EVENING

MARY slips off her right leather glove to reveal a small diamond ring, which leads us to believe she may be engaged to BENNY.

WE SEE store lights shutting off, so we know that it is after hours.

MARY, her high heels clicking against the pavement, moves briskly toward the barber shop.

MARY

OS

*Say you don't need no diamond rings
And I'll be satisfied
Tell me that you want the kind of
things
That money just can't buy...*

WE FOLLOW her gaze through the window and see a party scene in the barbershop, with a man we recognize as Benny, sitting in the chair, drinking champagne from a fluted glass, a long-legged, flimsily dressed woman straddling him in the chair.

Another woman is massaging his head, kissing his neck. Loud music can be heard through the closed window.

MARY decides to bravely plod on. She quietly opens the door and stands there without speaking. BENNY is having too much fun to even notice her.

MARY (CONT'D)

*I don't care too much for money
'Cause money can't buy me love...*

MARY tosses the ring in Benny's direction before running away.

It spins in slow motion.

MATCH CUT TO:

ESTABLISHING: SPINNING GLOBE, A TWA PLANE FLYING OVERHEAD.

NEWSREEL FOOTAGE: Beatlemania as it spontaneously combusted around the globe. Girls screaming hysterically as the band sings, *I Want to Hold Your Hand*, the boys mobbed, police escorting them into cars, holding off the mobs of screaming fans. WE SEE their arrival at New York's La Guardia Airport, their infamous February 1964 Ed Sullivan appearance, and interview clip with Murray the K, announcing their upcoming UK tour with MARY WELLS opening for them, which they rave about.

MURRAY THE K

So, I hear that you have a very special young lady opening for your UK tour.

JOHN LENNON

Mary Wells--she is totally fab!

His band mates all nod their affirmation.

RINGO AND PAUL

Mary Wells is absolutely fab!

MARY is beaming, grabbing her chest with pride and feeling for the first time true recognition of her work.

Backstage, in the dressing room, MAYE and MARY are smoking cigarettes, pacing. It is obviously early, as no other acts are there yet, except for roadies setting up the stage, doing sound checks.

MARY

I think this has to be the earliest we've ever been asked to show up for an appearance.

MAYE

Well, now, you're talking about the Beatles. Once those crazy, screaming girls show up we won't be able to get into the damn building!

Just then we hear pandemonium as the Beatles have obviously arrived. Hysterical teenage girls are screaming, surrounding their limousine, until Bobbies push them off. They are escorted inside with bulky security men surrounding them.

The four young men are all laughing, joking around, as they enter. They greet MARY and MAYE enthusiastically.

SHORT TIME LAPSE. The boys are sitting around, ebulliently conversing, joking, as the sound check and show preparation continue. PAUL is strumming a guitar.

PAUL MCCARTNEY

*Well, she was just 17
You know what I mean...*

There are three television sets propped atop old amps, side by side. JOHN's wife Cynthia, a stunning woman with long blonde hair and wire rimmed glasses, smiles at Mary, as do several of the others' girlfriends.

MARY

Look, Maye, all three TV channels
at once.

JOHN LENNON

Never miss a thing, that way.

JOHN gets up to adjust the rabbit ears on one set.

JOHN LENNON (CONT'D)

So, is everything okay? I mean do
you like the food here? Is there
anything else you need?

MAYE and MARY look at one another, astonished at the lovely consideration being showered upon them by them.

MARY

Oh, John, yes. Everything is
wonderful. First time I've had
bangers and mash. That's some hot
stuff!

They laugh.

MAYE

I really like your music.

JOHN LENNON

You like our music? My God, we
wouldn't be singing in a band if we
hadn't heard the likes of Chuck
Berry, Little Richard, Lloyd Price,
and now Motown..

He takes a drag of his cigarette and thinks for a minute.

JOHN LENNON (CONT'D)

Mary, your song knocked us off the top of the charts. No one has done that since this whole crazy thing started.

The others agree exuberantly.

PAUL MCCARTNEY

'at's right, y'know. Gene Pitney, Roy Orbison, even the Beach Boys and the Four Seasons haven't done what you just did.

Wistful, but smiling, Mary turns to Maye.

MARY

(sardonically)

I guess not everyone is lucky enough to record for Motown.

McCartney and Lennon discern no obvious comprehension of Mary's tone, as they nod good-bye, exiting. Maye helps Mary slip into her gown, fussing, making sure her hair and makeup are perfect.

INT. THEATER-HOURS LATER-BEATLES CONCERT. NIGHTTIME

Maye stands in the wings like a proud mother watching Mary walk onstage to an exuberant crowd, cheering and clapping. A few men whistle, as she is profoundly glammed up in a glittering gold lame gown, fitted at the waist, with glittery gold pumps to match. Her shiny black hair is in a bouffant upsweep.

MARY begins singing *You Beat Me to the Punch*, segues into *Two Lovers*, and then proceeds to "bring the house down singing *My Guy*. It is a lively, up-tempo scene, the British kids are excited and enjoying her set.

PAUL Is listening to the bass line of the song and walks back behind the curtain to where the bass player is standing to listen.

He seems lost in awe as he listens. The boys all nudge each other as their women try to catch a glance of Mary. Cynthia cranes her neck to no avail as John takes her arm, points to the shorter drummer of the band.

JOHN LENNON

You'll have a better shot behind Ringo.

MARY's set finishes and is rewarded with deafening cheers and applause. As she departs, WE HEAR the girls begin to scream with anticipation of the Beatles. They finally appear, and it quickly becomes a high decibel phenomenon. Outside WE SEE ambulances loading up girls who have fainted. Barricades hold back those who did not get in.

MONTAGE: Different venues on Mary's tour with the Beatles takes her; the tour's finale party; the Beatles with their girlfriends and JOHN's wife CYNTHIA in tow.

PAUL MCCARTNEY
George, that bass line on *My Guy*
just knocks me out every time.

GEORGE HARRISON nods in agreement.

PAUL MCCARTNEY (CONT'D)
Mary, we learned quite a lot about
showmanship watching you. I mean,
you work so hard. You give 'em
everything and more.

JOHN LENNON
Mary, England is totally in love
with you. And you didn't let them
down.

Finally, she is boarding a flight with MAYE at Heathrow Airport, en route home to America. Seated, she closes her eyes, a smile of satisfaction on her lips. WE SEE her vision of an album entitled "Mary Wells Sings The Beatles." Maye seated beside her is closing her eyes to sleep. Mary nudges her.

MAYE
Hmm? What's up?

MARY
It was so nice to feel loved
instead of used.

Maye opens her eyes, looks at Mary empathetically.

MAYE
(Grabbing and squeezing
Mary's hand)
Honey, let's let tomorrow take care
of tomorrow.

(MIDPOINT)

EXT. MOTOWN STUDIOS. A DAY LATER. AFTERNOON. INT. OFFICE.

Mary is seated at a table with ESTHER GORDY, her manager, a stack of newspapers resting on the table. MARY is pointing to them, talking animatedly, unhappy.

ESTHER GORDY

I just don't see why you are so upset, Mary. If I had that much love shown to me in a country that created Beatlemania in the first place, I'd be over the moon.

MARY

But don't you see, Esther? That's just it! They love me there! Those kids didn't just see color, they embraced it! They love Motown! They see me as *being* Motown! Yet, here, at Motown, I'm treated like a second-class citizen.

ESTHER GORDY

Oh, now Mary, that's not true.

MARY

Yes, it is true, Esther! Berry calls me in for ideas, feedback. *Mary, what do you think about this? What should we do about that? How'd you sing that line?* Free advice, I give them free advice all the time. But when I ask for *Operator* to not be a B side he ignores me. I was a teenage girl. I know what teenage girls like. He tells me I'm biased. Then it ended up being a popular song.

She lights a cigarette. Exhales vehemently.

MARY (CONT'D)

I had run-of-the-mill backup singers for years. I PAY these backup singers! I PAY the band! I pay the damn studio time! And Berry, he talks about
(mimicking him)
"Oh, we family. We all in this together!" Yeah, sure we are. He's making all the money, I get 1% at the end of the day, and he's putting my money into The Supremes.

ESTHER GORDY

What? Now, that's just not...

MARY

DON'T DENY IT! DON'T YOU DARE EVEN TRY TO DENY IT! You'd be insulting my intelligence! We ALL know what's going on around here, okay? Maybe some folks just blindly fall into place and accept the company line, but I don't buy *all for one and one for all* crap. I have my dignity. I want my fair share. I want to be treated with the same respect he shows the songwriters like Barrett and Smokey and the Hollands, and Lamont. I know that I helped build this company. I know that as fact, not ego. And I also know I deserve to be compensated for it. More than that, though, I deserve the gratitude of respect.

ESTHER rises, looks at MARY with a serious disposition.

ESTHER GORDY

I hear your concerns. I do. I have a meeting with Berry right now. We will arrange a dialogue with the two of you on this subject. You might want to have representation with you. Negotiations require that, you know.

MARY

If it's just a "dialogue"
(she assigns her hands as
a quotation mark)
I shouldn't need a damn lawyer. But
you best believe I will have a fine
one.

ESTHER departs and MARY looks a bit distraught. She looks out the window at the falling snow, briefly FLASHING BACK to her youthful days of scrubbing those cold linoleum floors with her mother. A tear falls down her cheek.

EXT. COFFEE SHOP. SNOW FALLING, GRAY AFTERNOON.

MARY and MAYE are smoking cigarettes and drinking coffee.

Untouched food sits on the table. There is a palpable aura of both sadness and hurt as MARY relays her meeting with ESTHER to MAYE. MAYE keeps shaking her head in disbelief.

MAYE

I just can't believe you'd even think of breaking with Motown. You ARE Motown, Mary! It just doesn't make sense.

MARY

But that's just it, Maye. I helped put Motown on the map and now they want to pretend that they did it all without me, and that I got to where I am solely BECAUSE of them!

MAYE takes a drag of her cigarette, shaking her head in disgust at the situation.

MAYE

Mary. Mary, listen. Who gives a good goddamn what they THINK? Just go in there and ask for more money. You **remind them** how they got here, how you got here. How you worked hard to sing and perform at this level, that we designed your look, your face and clothes and hair, that your performances are 60 minutes of sweat like no woman before...But don't throw out the baby with the bath water, girl! This isn't some cheating boyfriend. This is business, a big business, and you don't just break up THAT family. Copyrights last a lifetime!

MARY takes a long drag of her cigarette as she stares at MAYE, thinking hard on her words. There is a steely silence belying her anger, as though MAYE in her reasonable manner gives MARY pause to reconsider her knee-jerk desire to quit Motown.

EXT. NEW YORK WORLD'S FAIR STAGE.

WE SEE a backstage dressing room area. The usual scurrying about, primping, singing, eating and drinking. SMOKEY is seated beside MARY, as they share conversation, smoking cigarettes. MAYE is also beside MARY, pretending not to listen to their conversation as she combs out one of MARY's wigs.

SMOKEY

So have you had it out with Berry,
yet?

MARY shakes her head, a bit wistful, a bit sadly.

MARY

I don't know, Smokey. I just don't
know.

He gets up, as he is preparing to take the stage soon. He
puts a hand on her shoulder, smiling sweetly at his friend.

SMOKEY

Sweetie, just pray on it. He'll
give you answer.

She smiles, pats his hand, looks at MAYE at he turns to
leave. She takes out another cigarette, lights it, sits back
in the chair, looking off into the distance at first, then
back at MAYE.

MARY

You see, Maye, I told you I should
have been brought up with God.

MAYE

Honey, you went into that closet
and got on your knees for Jackie
Wilson years ago. See, I remember
that story. Now, you just ask Him
to guide you on this decision.

MARY

Maye, hush! Someone hears you say
that they will get a whole
different picture of what happened!

MAYE realizes what she had said and starts laughing
hysterically.

AIRPORT BAGGAGE CLAIM

Mary is seated, awaiting her bags from an assistant. As she
takes out a cigarette, a well-dressed man in a suit and hat
flicks open his lighter. She smiles, thanks him, and as she
takes a puff of the cigarette looks at him as though she
might recognize him.

MARY

Don't I know you?

He extend his hand.

MAN

I'm Morty Croft, Creative Director
for Twentieth Century Fox. I
discovered Shirley and Lee, Louis
Jordan, Roy Milton, Faye Adams and
Percy Mayfield.

He hands MARY his card.

MARY

Is this the same 20th Century Fox
that produces films?

MAN

Yep. Same one.

MARY

You know, it's funny that of all
people at this time in my life, I
should run into you at the baggage
claim area of an airport.

MAN

It's a big business in a small
world. I heard through the
grapevine that you might be
considering leaving Motown. I just
hope you will consider us as your
new home.

He stands up to leave, places his hat upon his head.

MAN (CONT'D)

Call me, Mary. We can get you to
that next level.

MAYE, by this time, is standing beside MARY and the baggage
carrier. She observes the encounter, while MARY lights a
cigarette, then stands to depart. They begin walking together
out the door,

MAYE

Well?

MARY

Maye, 20th Century Fox.

By now they are in the back seat of a cab, departing the
airport. MAYE shakes her head at what MARY just told her. She
stares at MARY for more information.

MARY (CONT'D)

They're not just a music company;
they make movies, Maye.

(MORE)

MARY (CONT'D)

I would love to be in the movies.
Maye, when I was a young girl
sitting in the movie theater, and,
oh, those musicals! I wanted to be
just like Leslie Caron in *Gigi*. Or,
you know, Barbara Streisand in
Funny Girl.

MAYE

You would be great in musicals,
Mary. Let's see if these folks
promise to make that happen.

MARY

Of course they will! Why wouldn't
they? And finally, I'll be
independent. And have respect,
Maye! That's what I'm after,
respect.

INT. MARY'S APARTMENT. THE NEXT EVENING

The telephone rings. Mary is watching Hazel. She laughs at
something she hears while walking over toward the kitchen
phone, still chuckling as she picks up the receiver.

MARY

Hello?

ATTORNEY

Mary, I found out some things about
Motown and your music.

MARY

Go 'head, Counselor, I'm all ears.

ATTORNEY

Motown has had several dummy
labels, box companies, where
they've hidden albums. Plus
Records, Sampson Records, Anna
Records, to name a few.

MARY

What does that mean for me?

ATTORNEY

(long sigh)

Well, for one thing you aren't going to get back your *Live On Stage* royalties because there were multiple locations, multiple acts and backup singers, plus multiple companies- and they own them all.

Mary looks stunned. She's speechless.

ATTORNEY (CONT'D)

Look, I'll keep digging around. I just wanted to keep you abreast of my findings.

MARY

Thank-you. I appreciate that.

FLASHBACK:

INT. APOLLO THEATER NEW YEARS' EVE DEC. 1962

Festive atmosphere, party hats, streamers, confetti, usual New Year's Eve decorum. Mary is onstage singing *Bye Bye Baby* to a wildly exuberant, almost delirious audience. Clapping, whistling. Mary is energetically cavorting across the stage, arms, hands punctuating her lyrics. Her voice is loud, throaty, almost animalistic.

SLOWLY FADING OUT FROM FLASHBACK.

Mary looks out her large picture window into the moonless night skies. Tears begin to fall.

EXT. SIDEWALK. DAY

Maye and Mary hail a cab and settle in the back seat. The driver has the car radio on as he speeds through the city streets. Maye shivers, Mary wraps her arms around herself.

MARY

Cold as Grant's tomb this morning.

MAYE

Girl...

Mary cracks open the window slightly, as she begins to light a cigarette. Just then...

CAB RADIO- NEWS ANNOUNCER
 Singer Sam Cooke was found shot to death last night at a hotel in Los Angeles. He was killed by a motel manager after a woman he had kidnapped apparently ran there for shelter with his clothes.

MAYE
 What the hell! Oh, no that can't even be true. Oh, now something is fishy! We know Sam. Sam never even chases women; they chase him. Sam would never...wait! Oh God! Did he just say Sam was...

She looks at MARY who is stunned, tears streaming freely down her cheeks. MAYE, too, begins to sob. They hold each other.

FADE TO BLACK.

INT. MARY'S APARTMENT-LATE THAT SAME EVENING

Mary cannot sleep. Tossing, turning. Finally, she gets up, goes to the refrigerator, pours a small glass of orange juice, and sits at the kitchen table sipping it. A sudden notion crosses her mind. She reaches for the wall phone.

MARY
 Curt? It's Mary. Did I wake you? Is it really 2 am? I'm sorry, that's okay, go back to...yes, yes I heard. It's horrible. I thought of you and...are you okay? Oh, you're not alone? No no, don't apologize, I was kind of seeing someone myself, but...Well, look, I uh...I'd better go. Yeah, sure, that'd be great. Bye.

EXT. MARY'S APARTMENT: AFTERNOON

BERRY GORDY is getting out of a Cadillac Fleetwood. He looks around the neighborhood for a moment, sees a cloudy, gray sky, feels a cold wintry chill. He carries his briefcase to MARY's front door. She answers, motions for him to enter, closes the door behind him. She motions for him to sit down on the sofa. He sits, places his briefcase on the coffee table before him, takes out some papers. He puts his glasses on.

BERRY GORDY

So, Mary. What's this I hear about you wanting out of Motown? Is it true.

She takes a long drag of her cigarette, blows the smoke out for what seems to be an extra-long time, as though she is calculating her response. BERRY seems viscerally agitated.

More hurt than angry, more shaken than nervous. Clearly, this is about more than money to him.

BERRY GORDY (CONT'D)

So it is true.

MARY

Yeah, it's true. It's also true I helped build Motown. My records, my concerts, my image all helped Motown become a major player in the music business. But I am treated like a--a dumb schoolgirl there. I am never given any credit, I am paid half of what Marvin, or Smokey, or Barrett, or even the Hollands are paid. Mary Wells, singer of *My Guy*, who knocked the damn Beatles off the charts. They had 5 hits, Berry, five! 1 through 5! They asked to tour with me. Not Smokey, not Brian, not Marvin, but me! And you know what, Berry? You know what? Those British kids loved me! The Beatles treated me with more respect in those few days than I have ever gotten at Motown.

BERRY GORDY

Mary...Mary everybody at Motown loves you.

MARY

(guffaws)

Love? No, no there's no love there. Just allegiance to you, Berry. No loyalty to me. And maybe it's my fault. *Oh, Mary, she's so sweet. Such a sweet girl.* I've been your doormat while everyone walks over me to get to their own destination in Motown. Well, I want to chart my own course. I want to sail this ship, Berry. I want to be captain, not crew of my own career.

BERRY GORDY

Okay, okay, Mary. You can have that. You can have part ownership in this company. You will be compensated from now on for everything you do. Give us another chance, please.

MARY, still standing, leaning against the fireplace mantle, takes a long drag of her cigarette. She looks at BERRY, who appears physically and emotionally agitated. He hastily takes the papers off the coffee table, stands and hands them to her.

MARY

Berry...

BERRY GORDY

Mary, just look at it. I am offering you a piece of Motown Records. That'd make you a co-owner. A woman owning part of this record company! I would never offer this to Diane or anyone else.

The mention of Diane triggers an instantaneous look of disgust from MARY. She chooses not to even look at the contract offer and hands it back to BERRY. He is crestfallen, appears ready to cry.

BERRY,

Look, Mary, you want me to get on my knees, I'll get on my knees.

Suddenly, he is on his knees, begging her. She is more stunned than moved.

MARY

Berry, stop, get up. Now understand me. I want the freedom to make my own musical choices. I want more than being part of this so-called family like you're my Daddy. I'm a grown woman and a professional singer. But here's my real problem:

Mary takes a drag of her cigarette, blows smoke in Berry's face.

MARY (CONT'D)

I know about your dummy companies,
I am learning about the sad truth
of this wretched business, and,
frankly, I can no longer trust you
because you crossed a line stealing
my money and giving it to your
mistress who is busy screwing her
own group.

Suddenly Berry's look morphs from pitiful into visceral anger

BERRY GORDY

Now wait a minute, Mary, that's
just not true!

MARY

The hell it's not! Look, Berry, I'm
sorry. I am. But I've donated far
too much of my self-respect to
people were undeserving. It's high
time for me to preserve my dignity.
This is my final decision.

After a long moment of stunned silence, BERRY picks up his
papers, places them into his briefcase, and gets up to walk
to the door. As he reaches it, he turns to her.

BERRY GORDY

Well, all right then, Mary. I guess
I will see you in court.

MARY

Uh-huh. See you in court.

After she closes the door, MARY collapses on the sofa, and
cries. Outside, BERRY gets into his car puts the key into the
ignition and begins to sob.

EXT. DAY OUTSIDE "SCHECK LAW OFFICES."

MARY is meeting with an attorney, along with MAYE. They are
now departing, signaling the legal end to her association
with Motown. MARY is smiling. She shakes hands with her
attorney. He hands her a card.

MR. SCHECK

Mary, go see my good friend Carl
Davis. Since You seem fond of 20th
Century Fox, he's your guy.

MARY

My guy?

All three laugh at the double intender of her song title.

MR. SCHECK

No, I mean he's the music producer
you need to see over there. He'd be
perfect for you. Get you to that
next mountaintop.

The ladies depart into a waiting car. Once inside, MARY and
exhales. She then lights her customary cigarette.

MAYE

I don't know, Mary. This here is
some uncharted territory for
sure, girl.

MARY seems a bit annoyed, then curious.

MARY

Why?

MAYE

Because we just don't know whether
they will do what they say. I mean,
we have to have faith in them, but
we don't know these men.

MARY

Oh, Maye, you worry too damn much.
I feel good! I'm free! I am free!
Ain't that peculiar? A peculiarity!

They giggle at the reference to MARVIN GAYE's song. MAYE
shakes her head, laughing at her friend's antics.

We can also see by her worried expression that MAYE is
clearly concerned about what MARY has done.

MIDPOINT

ESTABLISHING: TWENTIETH CENTURY FOX MUSIC STUDIOS-Day

Inside, beyond a glass door with the name "CARL DAVIS" we see
MARY and CARL, discussing music. He is a good-looking black
man in his late 30's, tall, with a solid build. She is
smiling a bit flirtatiously, he is peppering his conversation
with jokes, and they are enjoying the encounter. WE FAST
FORWARD to the music studio.

OS

STUDIO ENGINEER

OK, take six, *Never Never Leave Me*,
from the top.

MARY

*I love you more than anyone
Should ever be allowed to love
anyone or anything,
And I need you more than anyone
Should ever be allowed to need
anyone or anything...
Never, Never Leave Me,*

As the song plays in the background, Mary can be seen making the rounds of radio stations, plugging her record, smiling for photographers, talking on the airwaves to promote her new record.

SEVERAL DAYS LATER. MOTOWN STUDIOS. DAY.

BERRY GORDY is on the phone. The usual hustle and bustle around him.

BERRY GORDY

Listen, Bob, do me a huge favor.
Don't play Mary Wells' records
anymore. I know, I know that sounds
harsh, but she tried to split up my
company, take my producers and
songwriters with her. Nah, she was
disloyal, Bob. Disloyal.

He hangs up and dials another number again.

BERRY GORDY (CONT'D)

Dick, it's Berry, listen I have a
favor to ask. Please don't play
Mary Well's records anymore...

WE SEE MARY and CARL holding hands in a darkened restaurant.

She is sporting a large diamond. They seem happy, ebullient.

CARL sips his drink as MARY does he same. They stare at each other across the room, then laugh.

CARL DAVIS

You know, Mary, the minute you
walked into my office I said to
myself, oh-oh, now I am gonna have
to write that girl some big hits.

CARL DAVIS (CONT'D)

Those eyes and that talent-whew!
Lethal combination!

MARY

Carl, you are so kind to me.

He kisses her hand. Just then a young black couple walks past their table and the girl points to Mary.

GIRL

Look, Jesse, one of the Supremes!

CARL stands up protectively and the kids scurry to their table. He sits back down, shaking his head in dismay.

CARL DAVIS

Don't pay any attention to them.
Just goofy kids, that's all.

MARY looks wistful, pondering. She takes a drag of her cigarette.

MARY

I don't blame the girl. All you
hear on the radio these days are
the Supremes and The Temptations,
besides the British groups.

CARL is speechless, MARY is suddenly at a loss for words, herself. The waiter brings their dinners.

CARL DAVIS

C'mon, let's enjoy our dinner and
not think about business tonight,
okay? Plenty of time for that
tomorrow.

MARY nods. As CARL digs in heartily to his steak, she picks at her food, clearly disturbed by that last encounter, as though it portended a message about leaving Motown. CARL notices, puts down his fork, and touches her hand.

CARL DAVIS (CONT'D)

You're free, remember? You'll have
another number one hit, I guarantee
you will. Just give it time, okay?
Don't be so hard on yourself. You
are so driven, Mary. Mmm... this
steak is so tender! Mmm!

She placates him by eating, and then suddenly is all in, emotionally, deciding to forego her worries for the night.

INT.MOTOWN STUDIOS.

BERRY GORDY and his brain trust are listening to MARY'S new album. WE HEAR the beginning of *Stop Taking Me for Granted*, which elicits somewhat disgusted looks from BERRY due to the title's implications, and then a portion of *Never Never Leave Me*, which engenders a completely opposite response from him, one of enthusiastic appreciation.

BERRY GORDY

Wow! Wow! Wow! That song is
outasight! Why, it sounds like we
wrote it here at Motown.

The others all voice their agreement, nodding their heads,
chirping in unison of its great sound.

BERRY GORDY (CONT'D)

Listen, we've got some archived
songs of hers, right?

BRIAN HOLLAND

Yes, we do, as a matter of fact.

BERRY GORDY

Next year we will put those hits
onto an album. We'll monetize that
sound. Right now, we have enough to
keep us more than busy. Besides, we
don't want to be seen as trying to
compete or interfere with Fox.
That'd make us look bad. We'll
wait. But get it ready, gather it,
compile it, then let me know when
you have it all together. We'll
have another meeting about
presentation before production on
it.

BILLBOARD CHARTS, MARY'S LP CHARTING AT #85 WITH A BULLET.

WE SEE MARY, with MAYE beside her, receiving a check for
\$250,000, elation in her eyes and body language. She and MAYE
depart, having shaken hands with the lawyers for Fox.

Once outside, they jump up and down holding hands. Passersby
stare, bemused, but they are oblivious to them.

MARY

Poor little Mary Esther Wells is
now rich Mary Esther Wells! I've
made it, Maye! I've made it!

MAYE

You sure have, Mary, you sure have.

MARY

I'm going to get an apartment on Fifth Avenue, get me a car...

MAYE

A car? Honey, you won't need a car in New York. You need a driver, maybe.

MARY

Oh, I got me a driver. That's in my contract. Maye, come stay with me in New York. We can party like we did in Detroit, only this time we'll have money to really get down and groove! Go dancing, go shopping, I mean New York City, baby!

MAYE

Okay, but what about Carl? Aren't you two getting married?

MARY

Eh, he's always in LA. I need my space right now. I just want to have one last hurrah. C'mon! Let's go there tomorrow! I have some time off from touring.

MAYE is smiling, as she nods her head and hugs MARY.

MAYE

I am so happy for you, sweetie. I am.

EXT. FIFTH AVENUE, NYC.

MARY and MAYE are happily, laughingly sharing a taxicab on their way to a shopping spree. The driver is listening to the car radio playing softly.

RADIO DEEJAY

Now let's follow Mary Wells into her WORLD OF DREAMS.

Maye appears confused; Mary's expression grows increasingly defiant. She grabs Maye's arm, leans toward her to whisper in confidence.

MARY

(sotto voce)

I recorded this for Motown over two years ago! He never released it till now!

MARY (CONT'D)

(on radio singing)

At least I got a remedy
An antidote for misery
The secret is within my mind
Available at any time.
Now when the one I love makes me
cry
I stop for a moment
And close my eyes
And I just drift right on off
Into my world of dreams....

They are silent for a moment recognizing that Gordy is profiting off her music in her absence from the company. Suddenly she brightens.

MARY (CONT'D)

Maye, let's forget we ever heard that song. Let's have a ball on the money I DID make!

We SEE a MONTAGE of MARY and MAYE doing exactly as MARY dreamed. They shop at Saks, Bloomingdale's, Tiffany's; dine at 21 and other top restaurants and clubs; dance at discos.

WE SEE MAYE dancing with a blue-eyed blonde man that we recognize as (the late) actor Steve McQueen.

He gives MAYE his phone number on a printed card. She smiles and quickly returns to MARY waiting by the door to leave for another hot spot. They take a seat at a little table near the bar, order some drinks, and settle in to review the landscape. Within seconds, they see a man in the corner surrounded by a mob of people. They cannot see his face.

MARY (CONT'D)

I cannot believe you were dancing with Steve McQueen! Do you know how many women in America would have killed for that dance?

MAYE

Well, then in that case, Mary, I'm lucky to be alive!

She points to the commotion in the corner.

MAYE (CONT'D)

Wonder what that's all about.

MARY

Probably one of the New York Yankees. New Yorkers love their Yankees.

MAYE

Mary, we are spending a lot of money really fast. That advance was amazing, but from now on its all about record sales.

MARY

And Carl is in LA making the rounds, so I leave that up to him, now. All I have to do is sing. No more all for one, one for all, time wasted on meetings that don't concern me or paying for my own band and studio time. Fox takes care of everything.

MAYE

Yes, all that's true. Just the same, like Sam once told you, keep your eyes on the horizon. Let's slow down on all this. New York isn't going anywhere...OH MY GOD!

She grabs MARY by the wrist as she spots who the celebrity in the corner is.

MARY

What? What?

MAYE points to the corner, where the crowd has subsided to reveal the man behind the fuss. Unable to contain herself, she struggles to not scream.

MAYE

That's him! That's JACKIE WILSON!

Just as MARY looks at Jackie Wilson in utter shock, he hears his name called and looks in her direction. Their eyes meet and MARY feels like the proverbial deer in the headlights. WILSON comes over to the table and smiles at MARY. She meekly waves at him, smiling back.

MARY

I'm Mary Wells.

JACKIE WILSON

Yes, I know. You have a lovely voice.

MARY

Thank-you. Won't you join us?

As JACKIE sits down, a security guard beside him to shoo away autograph seekers and fans, he orders a drink, and refills for the ladies.

MARY (CONT'D)

You're not gonna believe this, but when I was 17, I wrote a song for you, and took it to Berry Gordy...

JACKIE is pleasantly surprised, charmed, and leans in to hear the story. MAYE makes her way to the ladies' room, giving the two time to get acquainted.

ESTABLISHING: FANCY HOTEL/INT. HOTEL ROOM-SEVERAL DAYS LATER-MORNING

As CAMERA PANS INSIDE WINDOW, we see the door closed to MAYE's bedroom, while MARY is in bed, scantily clad, just awakening. WE SEE JACKIE WILSON behind her, on the other side of the room, seated at a desk. He is using a razor blade to line up a white powder we assume to be cocaine. He removes a dollar bill from his wallet and proceeds to snort the drug through his nose. He sniffs several times, tossing his head back to absorb the powder, then takes a swig of his watered-down drink. MARY is observing him with curiosity.

MARY

What's that, Jackie?

He walks over to the bed, sits down, kisses her on the forehead.

JACKIE WILSON

It's cocaine. Keeps me able to perform at the level I do.

He climbs atop her, laughing.

JACKIE WILSON (CONT'D)

You look so beautiful first thing in the morning. I could wake up to you every day.

He begins to kiss her, as she wraps her arms around her crush, giggling as though she were 17 again.

MARY

You are even more adorable than I
imagined.

JACKIE WILSON

Am I now?

He continues to kiss and touch her, obviously preparing to
make love to her. She giggles, sighs, then moans.

INT. JACKIE'S HOTEL ROOM.DAYTIME. "TEN DAYS LATER"

WE SEE MARY'S belongings strewn about, as she has obviously
been staying with JACKIE. However, now she has changed her
reaction to JACKIE. Instead of the giggling schoolgirl crush,
she seems to be under his thumb, behaviorally, scared and
seemingly tense. JACKIE is dressed and ready to go out. MARY
is getting her coat. He goes over to her, seemingly miffed,
grabbing her coat off her shoulders.

JACKIE WILSON

Where you think you're going?

MARY

I just wanted to do some
shopping...

JACKIE WILSON

No, you don't need to do no
shopping. You stay right here till
I get back. You want to shop you
wait for me to take you,
understand?

She nods her head. He kisses her forehead.

JACKIE WILSON (CONT'D)

I'll be back in a couple of hours.
You just relax and watch TV. The
soaps are on.

He exits. She waits until she hears the ping of the elevator
door, and rushes to grab the telephone. She dials the phone.

MARY

Maye? Maye oh thank God, I got you.
You have to come get me out of here
before he comes back. I'm like a
damn prisoner here...yes! He's
fucking crazy! Oh, girl, I know; I
also found out he's married, and
she can have him back.

She hangs up the phone with MAYE and calls the front desk.

MARY (CONT'D)

Listen this is Mary Wells, the singer. I'm in Jackie Wilson's room, 224. Yes. Listen, I am scared to death of this man. If he should return, tell him I have left. No, don't call the police.

MARY begins packing up her belongings. There is ultimately a knock on the door. It is MAYE. They embrace. MAYE shakes her head.

MARY (CONT'D)

We have to move fast. Can you load this into a cab, and I'll grab another one and meet you back at the hotel.

She hands her things to MAYE, who has brilliantly gotten a porter manning a carrier trolley. MAYE packs MARY's belongings on the trolley and accompanies him down the hallway. After we hear the elevator ping, MARY begins to put on lipstick, don her coat, and grab her purse when she hears another ping, along with the sound of fast footsteps she realizes are JACKIE'S. She hides under the bed. He enters the room. She is terrified, covering her mouth so he won't hear her breathing heavily. He dials the phone.

JACKIE WILSON

This is Jackie Wilson in Room 223. Have you seen Mary Wells? She left? Well, you tell that bitch I'll be back.

He slams down the phone and leaves, slamming the door. After she hears the ping, Mary waits a minute, then scampers out the door, running frantically down several flights of stairs, hiding momentarily in the stairwell, making sure he has left the hotel. When she reaches the street, she frantically hails a cab, yelling out her address, before getting in and slamming the door, admonishing the cabbie to hurry. She exhales.

INT. LA SET OF *SHINDIG* TELEVISION MUSICAL VARIETY SHOW-TAPING-AFTERNOON

We hear the song *Um Um Um Um Um Um* as sung by Major Lance. He is on stage, snapping his fingers, dancing, while lip-synching this song, though the audience cannot tell.

There is a lively backup band that includes several sax players moving in lock step, and a row of backup singers, as well as The Shindig Dancers. The audience, made up mostly of teenagers, claps along, swaying to the song. MARY is backstage, watching with CARL. He winks at her, and she smiles.

CARL DAVIS

What do you think?

MARY

Great song. Great hook.

CARL DAVIS

Yes, indeed. Now we just have to monetize it. Listen, honey, I have to meet with a promo assistant in just a bit. Why don't you take yourself shopping for an hour or so? It won't take long.

INT. HOTEL LOBBY.

Mary enters the elevator, a shopping bag in one hand, her alligator bag in another. She exits the elevator and as she approaches the hotel room she has been sharing with CARL, she stops dead in her track, for she hears some music in the background, and both CARL and the woman laughing.

She tears open the door, startling the two. Upon seeing MARY so upset, the woman begins gathering her things.

WOMAN

Thank-you, Carl for your time and your ideas. I will tell Major Lance that you were responsible for the promo campaign.

CARL nods, and salutes her, as she is backing up and finally leaving out the door, nodding with a weak smile to MARY who is having none of it. She is fit to be tied. When the door slams, MARY grabs a glass from the bathroom and hurls it at CARL's head.

CARL DAVIS

For God's sakes, woman, calm down. There is nothing going on with her. She is a promotional assistant for...

MARY

Stop it, Carl! I'm hep to this jive game you men play.

(MORE)

MARY (CONT'D)

I been at this bus stop before. I
heard you two with my own ears.
Don't tell me what I heard I didn't
hear!

He stands to approach her and hold her, but she pushes him
away. She is nearly shaking with anger.

MARY (CONT'D)

The last time we broke up, it was
this same scene, Carl. You gone for
weeks at a time, always sayin' it's
business, always some excuse.

She wildly grabs all of her clothes out of the closet and
dresser, throwing them into a suitcase before locking it.

CARL is shaking his head, dumbfounded. She tosses her
engagement ring at him. He catches it above his head. Tears
are rolling down her cheeks, yet she is still bristling.

MARY (CONT'D)

Sam used to sing this pretty blues
song, *Get Yourself Another Fool*.
Well, you just find some two-bit
whore to sing that tune for you,
Carl, 'cause I'm done here.

As he attempts to protest, she motions for him to stop. She
turns and leaves abruptly, leaving him stunned. He sits on
the bed and buries his head in his hands.

V/O MAYE (O.C.)

Poor Carl. He really loved Mary.
And he insisted to me passionately
that the woman was not even his
type, it was just business. But he
had no way of knowing the pain Mary
had suffered in her life by placing
too much trust in men.
Unfortunately, she wasn't done yet.

"1966" EXT. ORLANDO, FLORIDA MUN. AUDITORIUM

Marquee reads "Joe Tex Revue: Barbara Lewis, Mary Wells,
Pigmeat Markham, Mabel John & More!"

MARY is on stage looking fabulous. WE SEE her splendidly
high, gold-sparkled heels, magnificent orange gown with
sequins, that swayed as she sang. Her long black wig cascaded
down her back and shoulders.

The crowd was totally in synch with her, clapping, dancing, cheering, some even singing along. The band was tight; the backup singers were dancing in rhythm.

MARY

*There's not a man-n- t-day who
could take me away from my
guy... (Tell me more!)
There's not a man t-day who
could take me away from my guy...*

She finishes the song as the band keeps playing and exits blowing kisses to the audience who scream wildly for her.

MARY happily hugs everyone backstage, happy with her performance. Just then we see a short, stout black man, obviously a comedian named Pigmeat Markham, dressed in a judge's robe. He struts across the stage yelling.

PIGMEAT MARKHAM

Here come da judge! Here come da judge!

As the crowd roars with laughter, the emcee returns to the stage to announce the next act. We hear this in the background as MARY spots CECIL WOMACK.

EMCEE

Ladies and gentlemen, put your hands together for Miss Barbara Lewis!

BARBARA LEWIS

*Hello Stranger, seems like a mighty
long time,
shoo bop shoo bop, yeah...seems
like a mighty long time, my baby,
ooh...Oh, my, my, my, my, I'm so
happy to see you again...*

MARY

Cecil Womack! What on earth...

CECIL

Hi, Mary. I heard you were performing here and I thought I'd drop by to see you.

She looks around, presumably for Curtis, but doesn't see him.

MARY

Where's Curtis?

Cecil smiles a cunning smile that takes Mary aback just a bit.

CECIL

Oh, now, Curtis...well, you see, he
got married. Just the other week,
in fact.

She is astonished at the news. Her jaw drops and then she suddenly composes herself, straightening. She takes out a cigarette.

MARY

Damn. Well, now, isn't that
something?

CECIL

Not only is Curtis married, but
he's about to become a daddy.

MARY nods her head realizing that Curtis had to get married if after two weeks his bride was already pregnant.

CECIL (CONT'D)

So you're coming out with me
tonight. I won't let you say no.

MARY

You won't...boy, you crazy!

Cecil laughs, which annoys MARY.

MARY (CONT'D)

I am going to go back to my hotel,
get out of this gown and have me a
bubble bath. Hear me! I am not
going out with you or anybody.

CECIL

Aw, c'mon, Mary. I came all the way
here to see you. At least have
dinner with me. I'm hungry!

MARY

You're hungry? Yeah, 'cause you're
still growing!

She laughs. He looks a bit hurt, a serious expression on his face. She grabs his forearm and leads him toward the outside.

MARY (CONT'D)

Okay, just dinner. Then you get in
a cab and go home, understand?

CECIL

Okay but know this, Miss Mary Wells. I intend to marry you.

MARY simply looks at him like he is insane.

MARY

Let's just go eat.

INT. HOTEL ROOM. NIGHT

Mary is sitting cross-legged on her bed, smoking a cigarette, wearing a slip. A scarf is wrapped over her head. She wears no make-up.

MARY

Curtis? This is Mary.
Congratulations. Oh, don't, I understand the situation, okay?
Listen, Curtis. I have to ask you a question. What in the holy hell is the matter with your brother?
Cecil, that brother! That boy won't leave me alone! Lord! Yes, he's crazy!

MARY (CONT'D)

Been at my doorstep every day. Talk to him, Curtis. Make him leave me alone.

WE HEAR CURTIS laughing. His speech is muffled. MARY nods.

MARY (CONT'D)

Okay, okay, I'll be come to your mama's birthday party. Wait--where is it? In Cleveland? Well, yes, I could fly there, but when is it?
Oh, next Sunday? I don't have a gig next Sunday, so, yeah, I guess that'd work just fine...Curtis?
Promise you'll dance with me.

We cannot hear what he says, but MARY's face lights up and her smile indicates that something sweet was finally said by CURTIS.

ESTABLISHING: CLEVELAND. SMALL HOUSE IN A RESIDENTIAL NEIGHBORHOOD.

INT: PARTY SCENE IN THE ADJOINING LIVING AND DINING ROOMS.

A large family party is taking place. There is dancing, singing, piano playing by CECIL, as his brother BOBBY plays guitar.

CURTIS

Mary, will you do me the honor?

The two appear smitten as they begin to slow dance, looking into each other's eyes, oblivious to CURTIS' wife feeding their newborn baby in the adjacent kitchen. She is also unaware that CECIL looks dejected by the sight of his heartthrob, MARY, dancing with his married brother.

When the song finishes, MARY giggles, as does CURTIS, still somewhat shy and obvious smitten with her. CECIL is viscerally agitated, and stomps hurriedly into the kitchen to talk to his mother. CURTIS's wife, sensing he wants privacy, takes the baby out onto the back porch swing, bottle in hand.

CECIL

Mama! Curtis is dancing with Mary!
He's flirting with her! She always
liked him better and now he's
getting in the way of my pursuit of
her. It's not fair, Mama! It's not
fair!

MAMA wipes her dishwater-wet hands on her apron, and goes over to her son, wraps her arms around him, calms him down.

MAMA WOMACK

Now, now, Cecil, I will talk to
Curtis. I 'm sure it's just
harmless. After all, dancing is
innocent enough, right? Don't mean
nothin.' Just dancing!

As she laughs heartily, she rubs CECIL's back, looking into his eyes until he smiles. When he finally does, she nods her head, goal attained. CECIL walks back into the living room.

MAMA walks over to CURTIS who is standing near the table with pop, liquor and a bucket of cold beer, along with assorted party food. MARY is laughing at something CURTIS just said.

MAMA WOMACK (CONT'D)

Curtis!

He turns around, startled. MAMA motions the imperative "Come HERE!" using her index finger, wiggling it just above her nose, and between her "I-mean-business-son!" glare.

CURTIS follows his mother not unlike a puppy dog with its tail between its legs. MAMA looks to see that CURTIS' wife is out of earshot, along with any other family members, as she leads her son into the back hallway, in front of the closed bedroom doors.

MAMA WOMACK (CONT'D)

Listen to me Curtis. You leave your younger brother's girlfriend alone, hear me?

CURTIS tries to protest but to no avail. MAMA put her hand up to stop his rebuttal.

MAMA WOMACK (CONT'D)

Baby, c'mon! You are a married man, now. With a child! You can't have Mary and have that, too. You made a commitment to Donice, Curtis. Before God and family. It's too late for Mary, don't you see? Let your brother have some happiness.

MARY and CECIL are talking in the living room. He is trying to make her smile. Finally, she gives in to it and does. He asks her to dance, and she accepts.

MAYE

V.O.

INT. RESTAURANT

MARY is lunching with MAYE. She is actually eating a sandwich, besides smoking her usual cigarette. MAYE is enjoying a cocktail, and her salad is as yet untouched.

MAYE

So, you're hungry, I get that. But what's the big news? You called me to meet you for something incredible, you said.

MARY puts her sandwich down, wipes her mouth with her napkin.

As she finishes chewing the last remnant, she takes MAYE's hand, smiling.

MAYE (CONT'D)

I'm getting married again. To Cecil.

Completely stunned, MAYE sprays her drink to the side of the table in disbelief. She stares at MARY, who is a bit confused, a bit bemused, and completely surprised at MAYE's reaction. Suddenly, MAYE starts to laugh.

MARY

What is so damn funny, Maye?

Maye gathers herself, slowly ceasing her laughter.

MAYE

Cecil Womack? Seriously? Mary, he's only 19. You're 23.

MARY shrugs, feeling a bit miffed at MAYE's reaction.

MARY

So what, big deal.

She switches emotional gears, taking out a cigarette, and after taking a puff, smiling radiantly.

MARY (CONT'D)

We're gonna make some beautiful babies, Maye.

MAYE

(eyes widening in
comprehension, nodding.)

Ah! Yes! All those babies...

Mary smiles, happy and content with her decision in the moment. She takes a bite of salad

MAYE shakes her head in wonder, yet says nothing, taking a bite of salad, and finally nodding.

ESTABLISHING: CLEVELAND CHURCH FACADE "OLIVET INST. CHURCH"
DAY

Inside, WE SEE MARY in a bridal dress, her veil still in MAYE's hands. MARY looks distraught.

MARY

Maye, I don't want to go through with this. I really want to just run the hell out of here and never look back.

MAYE

Then all you have to do is get up and walk on out of here.

MARY shakes her head, on the verge of tears.

MARY

All his family is out there. All my family is there. How in the world am I going to get out of this?

She lights a cigarette, exhales.

MARY (CONT'D)

I guess I should have been more religious.

MAYE

Huh?

MARY

I was so lonely, I got on my knees and asked God to send me someone to love. It should have been Curtis, but he sent me Cecil, instead.

MAYE says nothing because she knows how futile MARY'S longings are. She has tears in her eyes for her friend. MARY looks at her sadly, looks at the church vestibule, stands up.

MAYE places MARY'S veil on her head, and they get ready to line up behind her bridesmaids, already there, except for MAYE. MARY pretends to smile for her family and friends. The couple leaves the church in a shower of rice, smiling happily.

MAYE

V.O.

Once Curt was resigned to his marriage, Mary, who grew up without a father, was adrift once again. And she'd always go looking for him in men; it was her kryptonite. But when a strong woman awakens one day from that temporary haze, she'll feel the urge to unchain her heart from that relationship.

END ACT II

ACT III

"SEVERAL YEARS LATER"

EXT: SMALL RANCH HOME IN ROLLING HILLS, CALIFORNIA/INT.
LIVING ROOM

MARY is dutifully serving coffee to a couple who is visiting the newlyweds in their living room. CECIL is seated on the sofa, chatting amicably with the wife, who is a bit flirtatious. The husband is seated in one of two chairs, MARY sits down in the one opposite, her husband to her right.

MAN

Mary, I'd like to produce you singing *My Guy* in either a TV musical revue, or a music-oriented film.

MARY

Oh, that sounds good, real good.
I'd love to get back to work.

Suddenly, WE SEE CECIL shoot her a darting glare. She senses he is controlling her, and in fear of him, resets.

MARY (CONT'D)

Well, actually, you have to run it by my husband when the time comes.

CECIL turns to the man and abruptly cuts the meeting short.

CECIL

We have to get up early tomorrow and get into the studio, actually. I hope you won't think me rude for cutting this short.

The couple looks at each other in bewilderment at first, then they both stand up to leave.

MAN

No, no, I understand, it's quite alright, Cecil.

After they make their way out of the home, CECIL locks the door and turns to MARY, who is standing there, arms folded across her chest, embarrassed by his anti-social behavior.

CECIL

Listen to me, Mary, and listen good. I don't want you talking to any man like that.

MARY

Like what? That was just business.

CECIL

From now on I handle your business. You don't need to be around people. You...you're like some little high school girl. You don't even know when someone is flirting with you. You don't talk to any man. In fact, you don't talk to any women; you don't talk to anybody. And that includes your friend Maye.

MARY looks sad, forlorn, paralyzed by her fear of CECIL. She says nothing in response, defeated.

MONTAGE OF MARY WELLS LPS FROM 1969-1975, CONCLUDING WITH "THE "COMPLETE JUBILEE SESSIONS"

We hear her sensuous version of *Come Together* as we also see her with CECIL producing her in the studio, playing guitar, directing other musicians as well as MARY. He is excessively detail-oriented, controlling, delegating anything.

MARY's children sit quietly outside with CECIL's brothers' wives and a few of their children. CURTIS and BOBBY are in the studio.

When CECIL leaves for a moment, we see MARY approach CURTIS and they both laugh at something she says. It is clear that she still likes him, though not displaying anything inappropriate.

CURTIS

Hey, Mary, I'd like you to meet our engineers...

She nods in recognition and smiles.

(Clickety-clop of
approaching footsteps)

Cecil approaches the room as Mary catches his visage and abruptly returns to the microphone. She avoids meeting his gaze.

Curtis, stopped in mid-sentence watches his brother eye her suspiciously, but elects to say nothing.

"1975: ROLLING HILLS, CA." EXT, DOOR OF MARY AND CECIL'S HOME.

It is a modern ranch style, flanked by palm and eucalyptus trees, set in a woodsy area, apart from other homes. The backyard has children's sandbox, slide, an empty rubber pool and swing set.

A very pregnant MARY is pushing a six-year-old girl and an 8-year-old boy on the swings. MAYE, meanwhile, pulls up in front of MARY's house in a rental car, blasting Smokey Robinson's *Cruising*.

MAYE spots MARY from over the fence as she stands atop the front porch step and calls out to her waving. She opens the gate herself, not waiting for MARY, rushes over to her. The two friends hug, with MAYE fussing over the children, who smile shyly.

She hands the little boy a small toy truck, and he lights up, running onto the patio to watch it zoom down the concrete. She kneels down and gives MARY'S daughter a doll, causing her to squeal with delight.

MARY

Stacey, Junior, what do you say to Aunt Maye?

STACEY & JUNIOR (IN UNISON)

Thank-you, Aunt Maye!

MAYE

He's not home, is he?

MARY

No, thank God. He's at a meeting with promoters. We left Jubilee Records a few years back.

MARY (CONT'D)

I have no faith in record companies, anymore, Maye. They all just lie...But... we take the kids and we tour as Womack and Wells, now, you know. He's playing guitar as my back up.

She playfully rolls her eyes. MAYE nods. They walk over to the patio picnic bench and sit down on the benches. An ashtray rests atop the red-checkered plastic tablecloth, and it soon has MARY'S cigarette ashes.

MAYE

So how is it going? How are YOU
doing, darlin'?

MARY shrugs.

MARY

I make it work, you know? Routine.
Get up, feed the children, feed
him, clean the house. The shows--
Maye, we make nothing. This life in
California, it just hasn't been
what he promised. I told him I want
to go back east, and I think he
will do it just to keep me happy.
Whatever that is. But the Womacks--
I love them. I love having family
like that, you know? I didn't have
that growing up, just me and Mama.

MARY takes a sip of wine. MAYE cocks her head as she looks
deeply at MARY, not completely satisfied her friend is laying
her soul bare. MARY takes a drag on her cigarette, staring
back at MAYE, until giving in.

MARY (CONT'D)

What?

MAYE

Why you drinking in the middle of
the day if things are so hunky
dory?

MAYE doesn't respond. She looks down, eyes averted from MAYE.

MAYE (CONT'D)

Are you in love with your husband,
Mary? Be honest with me. We've
always been honest with one
another, haven't we?

MARY looks a bit shaken by that question, as she looks away,
then looks back at MAYE, blinking back a few tears, before
looking down as she answers.

MARY

You know, Maye, we don't all get to
live in the enchanted cottage,
okay? I have what I need; children
I love, a man who protects us.
(pauses, reflectively)

I do think I miss the east coast,
though...

MAYE

It's my fault. I should have stopped you from ever walking down the aisle with that man.

MARY

There was no stopping me, Maye.

MAYE

Maybe. But he's keeping you prisoner, Mary. He even follows you into the bathroom when you go! You said so yourself! Why, he's just like Jackie, only without the drugs.

MARY

Once we get out of here, things will improve. These LA record people don't understand black folks' music. It's all about The Troubadour and the Whiskey and rock bands, country rock. They have amnesia about Motown.

MAYE

But how would you know, Mary? He's keeping you away from anybody who is anybody!

MARY

Oh, well, now, if some music producer really wanted to find me...

Maye cuts her off.

MAYE

Gamble and Huff wanted to write for you, Mary! Gamble and Huff! The best in the business! He sent them away, too, didn't he?

MARY begins to feel conflicted, a sense of cognitive dissonance which causes her discomfort. She abruptly stands up.

MARY

Maye, I love you, but you have to go. I need to start dinner and giving these babies their baths.

MAYE

Okay, Mary.

The two hug good-bye, both with tears in their eyes.

MAYE (CONT'D)

I love you, Mary. And I'm always here for you. But you have to get back to being Mary Esther Wells. Remember *her*? That **strong** woman who walked away from money by deception, who stood up for herself against powerful men fighting for what she believed in. I miss **that** Mary Wells.

Clenching her fist, she lightly taps her heart.

MAYE (CONT'D)

(softly, tearing up)

And you don't have to go far to get her back. She's still right here.

As the gate closes behind MAYE, whose gait is hastened, MARY gathers her children to her, as she stops to watch MAYE get into her car and drive away.

MARY and CECIL in the studio, MARY performing with CECIL, smiling for the audience beyond any smile she had for her husband, her audience brightening her disposition quite dramatically, and noticeably. WE SEE THEM traveling in the family car, kids in tow in the back. MARY looks out the window, gazing into the recesses of her thoughts, trapped in a forlorn haze.

MAYE (V.O.)

Misgivings or not, CECIL and MARY stayed together for 11 years for the sake of those kids, mostly. Oh, MARY was a wonderful mother. She was happy to have some time off to raise her children, but she needed to be performing, and not just alongside CECIL who eventually had his brother BOBBY produce MARY, just so they would stop fighting. MARY called me here and there; she was not happy...

Montage...

WE SEE Mary taking her kids to school, reading to them, cooking for her family as Cecil sits at the head of the table.

WE SEE Cecil and Mary in the studio, as Mary sings, stops abruptly and argues with Cecil.

Then we see her singing again in the studio with Bobby Womack, the two laughing and more relaxed.

MAYE (V.O.) (CONT'D)

In all honesty, I don't think CECIL was either. In truth, MARY wanted the safety of a strong man back then, but she always outgrew their control and would fight to be free again. Yet, like most people, she wanted love. And she wasn't done fighting for it...

INT. WOMACK FAMILY CLAN HOME IN CLEVELAND, OHIO "CHRISTMAS, 1975"

Mary is in the family kitchen helping Mama Womack get the family dinner onto the dining room table, where some adults were gathered. The children are still playing as some adults are rounding them up, admonishing them to wash their hands and prepare to sit down to Christmas dinner.

CECIL, appearing somewhat unkept in appearance, messy hair and old baggy clothes, walks in the back door with CURTIS, who, by contrast, appears well-coiffed, dressed neatly, sharply, and smiling at MARY, who smiles back. She does not even look at her husband who saunters into the living room to be with the rest of the family. MAMA takes a bowl of snap peas into the table.

MARY

You look real nice, Curtis.

CURTIS

You look nicer. Except...

He moves toward her and fixes her hair a bit, moving her bangs off to the side.

CURTIS (CONT'D)

There. Now you look perfect.

MARY

Give me your comb.

He hands her his comb, and she proceeds to pull his hair into a bit of a hip Afro, particularly *au courant*. They are both chuckling when MAMA returns to the kitchen, shaking her head.

She hands MARY the gravy boat. MARY takes it, straightening, yet managing a knowing glance at CURTIS as she exits. MAMA shakes her head at CURTIS.

MAMA WOMACK

Curtis, you're fortunate to have a
SISTER-IN-LAW who is so stylish.

Mary tries to hide a chagrined expression for she knows inherently what Mama Womack is trying to do. Curtis, too, elects not to respond, instead grabbing the mashed potatoes and heading for the table with it.

EXT. CURTIS' HOUSE-NEXT DAY. AFTERNOON

CURTIS' wife is not home, children obviously in school.

MARY is sitting on the couch beside CURTIS, talking, as they exchange easy laughter. Both are drinking wine. She looks at her watch.

MARY

I have to run. The kids will be
home, soon.

CURTIS grabs her hand and suddenly kisses her. She falters, shocked, then, staring at him, allows him to kiss her again, this time passionately, before she pushes him away and runs out the front door to her car. She tries to put the key in the ignition, but her hand is shaking so badly she is having difficulty. She begins to weep.

CECIL & MARY'S APARTMENT. TIME LAPSE. NIGHT. FULL MOON

The children are in bed, as CECIL softly plays piano in the den, composing a song, not paying any attention to his wife.

MARY, her face contorted with the emotional pain she has been feeling of late, pours herself a drink, pours a second one and tiptoes into her bedroom, Cecil barely notices her leaving, if at all. She starts to weep, first quietly, then sobbing into her pillow.

EXT. MARY'S HOME, AFTERNOON. "THE NEXT DAY..."

Mary alone at home is cleaning her kitchen when she hears a knock at the front door. Opening it she finds CURTIS is standing at the before her, flowers in his hand. He hands her the flowers. She balks at first, until he motions for her to take them. He enters the home, takes off his cap, and she motions for him to sit on the sofa, as she moves a child's toy off of it. She sits on the love seat opposite him.

She is looking a bit disheveled, yet he pays no attention, looking at her with longing and love, seeing her as beautiful in his eyes, as his smile, his face ever brightening, are translucent of his emotions.

Curtis then straightens a bit, as he clears his throat to speak frankly and directly. He rubs her arm up and down gently.

CURTIS

Mary, I separated from Donice.

MARY appears stunned, speechless. CURTIS takes her hand, kisses it, as he looks into her eyes.

CURTIS (CONT'D)

I was too shy, too scared to tell you how I felt years ago. Every time I started to call you, I'd read that you were seeing someone. We had something the minute we met, but timing wasn't our friend. Mary, you and I aren't kids anymore. Life is short. I've been in pain ever since and so have you. Why are we fighting this, Mary?

She jumps up, visibly upset, arms folded across her chest as she paces with angst across the room before him.

MARY

Because! Because, Curtis, we are now in-laws! That's the reality! We aren't supposed to be still feeling this 11 years later! And your family is going to totally freak out and hate me forever if I leave Cecil and hook up with you! They will never forgive me.

CURTIS begins to tear up; Hanging his head, he is in obvious emotional pain.

MARY begins to soften, feeling sympathy for him. She sits beside him, puts her arm around him as he cries.

CURTIS

It is what it is, Mary. And it was meant to be. You know it, and I know it. That's all that counts. Isn't it? Well, isn't it?

He looks into her eyes as she sits motionless. He leans closer to her, their lips slowly touching, before passion overtakes them.

MONTAGE of CURTIS and MARY's whirlwind romance. He teaches her to play tennis, they dance at a club, take a moonlight stroll on the beach, kiss under the antique gas lamp, looking like a postcard image of lovers. Finally, WE SEE them in a motel, making love passionately, deeply. They seem like perfect soulmates.

By contrast, WE SEE CECIL and MARY having a fight. He screams a question at her; she nods her head affirmatively.

He storms out of the house with a packed suitcase.

EXT. WOMACK HOME. L.A. AFTERNOON.

INT. DINING ROOM

The WOMACK family all surrounding CURTIS who sits at the dining room table. They are viscerally enraged over the affair with MARY. He is disturbed, but immutable; shakes his head, refusing to leave her.

MAMA WOMACK

This is a stain on our family;
don't you see that? Why can't you
just end this craziness now, son?
Why?

CURTIS

(Screaming)
BECAUSE! BECAUSE WE CAN'T!
(Softening)
Because I love her. I always have.

He sits with his head hanging down, fighting tears, shaking his head in despair. His family looks disgusted with him.

DAYS LATER... GENEVA'S HOME-EVENING-

A mover exits a large truck with a dresser as Mary returns to live with her mother temporarily.

DAYS LATER. CECIL WOMACK HOME IN RANCHO PALOS VERDES

Another mover carries Cecil's trunk into the home he once shared with Mary

Cecil moves back into the home they once shared.

SAME DAY GENEVA WELLS HOME.

Mary has moved in with her mother temporarily. WE SEE MARY'S MOTHER, now old, knocking repeatedly on the bathroom door.

MARY doesn't open it. She is crying, distraught, in total despair.

MARY

Mama. Leave me be, okay?

GENEVA

Mary, I have to go to bed. Look, we'll talk in the morning, okay? Just stop worrying 'bout what those bible-thumping Womacks think. They'll get over it.

(softens)

In fact, don't waste time worrying 'bout what anyone thinks. Life is precious short, sweetheart.

MARY

Okay, good night, Mama. Love you.

GENEVA

I love you too, Mary. I just want you to be happy.

She wipes tears from her eyes as she turns to go, cane in hand.

MARY, stifling sobs, eyes a drink on the counter, downs it.

She looks in the mirror.

MARY

Mary Esther Wells. Just look at you... a disheveled hot mess of a woman, perennial loser with men, career sliding down the chute...

She has a flashback memory...

FLASHBACK:

ENGLAND- INT. THEATRE- DRESSING ROOM

MARY sits at the dressing room mirror, a drink sitting before her.

Just then a fan with a pen and photo approaches her.

FAN

Mary, can you sign this, please?

He hands her the photo and pen, then takes a small cassette recorder out of his pocket and begins to play it for her.

FAN (CONT'D)

I play this song every day, Mary.
I'm a loser with women, but
this....this gives me hope.

The song is *Once Upon a Time*. MARY begins to sing along, softly, tears welling in her eyes.

MATCH CUT TO:

MARY IN PRESENT TIME...

Tears falling, her emotional pain devastating her, MARY takes a bottle of sleeping pills out of the medicine cabinet and down them with her wine.

TIME LAPSE: MARY'S mother has to use the bathroom, cannot get a response to her knocking, calls the fire department with panic. They arrive and we soon see MARY in a bed at County USC Medical Center, alive, but weary, tired.

The WOMACKS are in the hospital room. CURTIS enters, as they try to keep him away. He fights them off, and they leave, giving up. He sits on her bed, holds her hand. He begins to sing a song about them that he wrote for their relationship, a reworking of *Two Lovers History*:

CURTIS

*A friend is what you wanted of me
But we had to grow up
At the age of 33
Now let's face it
Boy, let's erase it
Time will heal it
If friendship don't kill it*

MARY

I'm sorry, honey...

CURTIS

Shhh. Everything's good here, baby.
Little Sugar and her daddy love you
very much.

They embrace; he kisses her tenderly.

CURTIS (CONT'D)
No more sad days, baby. I just want
you to be happy. Whatever that is
for you, I'm down with it.

ESTABLISHING: EXT. CBS RECORDS INT. DOOR READS "LARKIN
ARNOLD" AND BELOW IT "R & B DIVISION"

Inside, WE SEE MARY and CURTIS visiting with LARKIN ARNOLD. A
stack of her albums rest atop his desk. He is staring out of
a huge picture window overlooking Hollywood. His hands are in
his pocket.

LARKIN ARNOLD
Okay, you have a deal.

MARY and CURTIS are elated, hugging one another. LARKIN
ARNOLD, a sharply dressed, savvy black CEO, who understands
his "product," wanly smiles then shifts to business mode.

LARKIN ARNOLD (CONT'D)
You are lucky, Mary. Baby boomers
now turn to Oldies Stations and all
of these oldies revues like K-EARTH
101, Art Laboe and the Disneyland
Oldies Revue will help you revive
your career, it's true. But you
have to groove on disco. It's what
the kids want, now. So, I have
these brothers I went to Howard
with. They gonna write you a couple
of tunes that fit those audiences.
We'll release the disco one first.

MARY looks perplexed.

MARY
I would think you'd release the one
that sounds like the old Motown
Mary, just to remind people who I
am, and then release the disco
song.

LARKIN ARNOLD shakes his head vehemently.

LARKIN ARNOLD
Trust me, Mary. This business has
changed drastically. Kids first,
boomers second.

She and CURTIS continue to sit there for a moment. They look
at one another and she shrugs, then agrees with a nod. Larkin
closes his briefcase, shakes hands with Curtis and rapidly
departs.

CURTIS wraps his arm around her.

CURTIS
(whispering)
Love that you took a stand, baby.
Don't worry. I got us both booked
at a Motown Revue-at Disneyland!

MARY
(astonished, happy)
We're going to Disneyland!
(She wraps her arms around
Curtis, kisses him.)

EXT. DISNEYLAND AMUSEMENT PARK. LATE MORNING

Mary, Sugar and Curtis sit in the iconic teacups as they twirl about, hands in the air, laughing. Curtis takes photographs.

EXT. STAGE DISNEYLAND. "MOTOWN REVUE"

DAVID RUFFIN, former lead singer of the Temptations, is on stage finishing a beautiful acapella version of *My Girl*.

DAVID RUFFIN
I got sunshine, on a cloudy day...

The crowd is enjoying it, and he finally bows, leaves the stage, hugging MARY and MARTHA REEVES, wishing them luck as he runs off.

Mary is on stage sings a few lines of her "boomer hit," *These Arms*, backed up by CURTIS, and MARTHA REEVES on vocals. The crowd is a bit lukewarm, so she stops, suddenly decides to skip the other release.

MARY
I want to sing a song that started
my career off with a boom. And I'm
gonna ask my friend Martha Reeves,
here to sing it with me.

MARY AND MARTHA (CONT'D)
*No muscle-bound man can take my
hand from my guy...*

The crowd suddenly becomes insane with excitement and enthusiasm. They are dancing, clapping, just like the old days. MARY And MARTHA appear to be having a blast. Martha suddenly cuts the song short and segues into *Dancing in The Street*, as the band struggles to keep up.

MARTHA & MARY (CONT'D)
 Calling out around the world...

It then evolves into *Two Lovers* and finally *Heat Wave*. We see huge rush of Latino kids moving toward the stage in delightful fury. The two only stop as the drummer's cymbals signal its end. They laugh hysterically, hugging madly as the crowd cheers.

MARTHA waves her good-bye. MARY turns to the drummer, whispering.

MARY (CONT'D)
 I was ready to rip that bitch's wig off! Let's finish with *Gigolo*. Lord have mercy!

She turns back to the crowd, smiling, and thanking them. The disco beat commences for *Gigolo*.

MATCH CUT TO:

"SAN QUENTIN PRISON" WEEKS LATER -DAY

MARY is performing *Gigolo*, and the inmates are wildly cheering her on. She is dressed glamorously in a low-cut gown and heels, wearing a blonde wig, just like her Motown days. She blows kisses to the inmates as she bows, her cleavage suddenly causing a ruckus. She comes offstage to an awaiting Curtis in the wing. He hands her a glass of champagne as he wraps her coat around her shoulders, shivering from the chilliness of the prison environment.

MARY

CURTIS holds her hand as he guides her to an awaiting SUV. She takes a sip and then another as he starts the car.

MARY (CONT'D)
 How was I?

CURTIS
 Motherfuckin' fantastic, hotly fabulous as always, baby.

She laughs, he joins her and they kiss.

MARY
 I didn't give them an encore, though.

CURTIS
 (laughing)
 OH, yes you did, honey. Yes, you
 did!

They both laugh as he speeds away.

Days later MARY AND CURTIS' APARTMENT. LATE WEEKDAY MORNING

MARY is washing dishes, humming, when the phone rings on the kitchen wall. She wipes her hands and goes to answer it.

MARY
 Yes, oh, hi, Maye. How y'been...
 What's ...what? WHAT! OH MY GOD! OH
 MY GOD! OH, NO! That's crazy!
 Marvin's own father shot him?

She lets out a wail and begins to sob.

MARY (CONT'D)
 I ...I can't believe that beautiful
 man is dead.

She leaves MAYE talking to herself on the other end; we cannot discern what she is saying. MARY pours herself a drink, downs it immediately.

She appears shocked and devastated. She begins to make a phone call and then abruptly hangs up. She is fidgety and crying.

INT. CAR, LATER THAT AFTERNOON.

RADIO NEWS BROADCAST
 ...Marvin Gaye was 44 years old,
 and is survived by his three
 children.

Curtis appears stunned at the news, his car tires screeching to a halt upon entering a parking spot on the street. He rushes to the front door, Mary is there to greet him, crying. They envelop themselves in an embrace.

CURTIS
 Damn shame.

INT. STUDIO NIGHT. WEEKS LATER.

CURTIS
 Mary, you know Frankie Gaye,
 Marvin's brother.
 (MORE)

CURTIS (CONT'D)

He sings a lot like Marvin. Let's see if we can't recoup those lost royalties from *Once Upon a Time* by re-recording a new version.

MARY looks dubious, but smiles, gracious yet cautious.

FRANKIE

*I never knew, what love could do,
til I met you...*

MARY appears pleasantly surprised. CURTIS stops, raising his arm in calling for time. MARY smiles warmly at FRANKIE.

MARY

Man, Frankie, I can't believe how much you sound like Marvin.

INT. TV SOUND STAGE "SOUL TRAIN"

WE HEAR the familiar intro to the show, "Sooouuul Train!" And see the famous Soul Train dancers. Then we see MARY singing *Gigolo*.

COCONUT GROVE NIGHTCLUB, MIAMI FLORIDA

Mary is onstage singing *Gigolo*. She is 8 months pregnant, glowing and happy. Moreover, she is dancing ferociously, shimmying and swaying. The drummer looks at CURTIS next to him on stage playing guitar and shakes his head in amazement, causing CURTIS to laugh. MARY ends the song and after taking a bow, she begins blowing kisses to the audience, she runs off into the arms of her friend.

MAYE

Any woman who wants labor induced should watch you dance!

MARY

Girl, please, I had three babies that all came out like bowling balls.

MAYE

Mary Wells, you still the First Lady of Soul!

CURTIS comes off stage and joins them, hugging MARY.

You all right, baby?

MARY
I am hungry as hell! Let's go eat!

INT. MARY AND CURTIS' BEDROOM. DAWN

MARY sits up with a start, feels her belly and shakes her husband. He is soundly sleeping.

MARY
Curtis! Wake up! The baby's coming!

CURTIS
Hmmm? Whaaa? Oh, God!

He jumps up in pajamas, grabs his keys and prepares to walk out the door. He turns to face MARY.

CURTIS (CONT'D)
Ain't you coming?

MARY
No, honey, I think I'll just stay here.

They both laugh, until she stands and her water breaks. That causes him to hurry in a frazzled manner, putting a coat over her, and taking her outside by the hand.

INT. LABOR AND DELIVERY ROOM OF HOSPITAL

Mary is in hard labor. CURTIS wipes her forehead; she pushes him away. He is seated in an office chair with wheels. He moves the chair to the right-side end of the bed, right near MARY'S right leg, which we can see is somewhat muscular from her years of dancing. Just then she has a massive contraction, and after he stands to grasp her arm, inadvertently kicks CURTIS' chair, sending it flying out the door and into the nurses' desk. They are at first startled, then erupt into laughter.

BACK TO:

MARY'S HOSPITAL BED

They are both admiring the beautiful new daughter they now have, MARY smiling happily at her baby and at CURTIS, momentarily at peace.

MARY'S mother is just leaving, kisses them both, as well as her new granddaughter. As she leaves, a nurse enters the room holding a small index card sized paper and pen in hand.

NURSE

Ms. Wells, how do you spell your daughter's name?

MARY

Sugar. S-u-g-a-r. Sugar.

NURSE

Last name?

CURTIS

Womack. W-o-m-a-c-k.

The nurse smiles and leaves. MARY looks very gratified, though tired.

CURTIS (CONT'D)

Mary, I want you to have everything you've ever wanted. Whatever it is, I'll try to make it happen, and I'll never hold you back from your dreams.

Just then other family members arrive to meet Baby Sugar, including 10-year-old Shorty who rushes to Mama's side. She hoists him up on the bed to meet his new sister. The new grandpa is taking pictures, MAMA WOMACK beams at CURTIS, kissing him, and then puts a hand on MARY'S shoulder.

MARY

(to Curtis)

I'm just so happy to have my family back again.

NIGHTTIME. MARY AND CURTIS' HOME. INT. BATHROOM

CURTIS is singing to little SUGAR as he bathes her.

CURTIS

(Singing. Imitating Cab Calloway)

Is you is or is you ain't my baby....

He swaddles her in a large towel, drying her off, before diapering her, and dressing her in a onesie. As he cuddles her in his arms, he heats up a bottle for her, still managing to sing to her. She is quiet and happy.

EXT. NIGHT MUSIC STUDIO-LONDON, ENGLAND. . UNION JACK FLIES ABOVE SMALL BRICK BUILDING. IT IS RAINING FIERCELY.INT

MARY and CURTIS are back in the studio. Five-year-old Sugar is playing with a doll on the chair across the room. MARY is looking at the sheet music with Curtis.

CURTIS

*I like this tune, Don't Burn Your
Bridges. We can work out a little
dialogue, y'know, like Shirley and
Lee in Love is Strange.*

Mary smiles in recognition of the song.

MARY

*And it he doesn't answer? And if he
still doesn't answer.*

Mary and Curtis harmonize, trying to capture the essence of the song.

MARY AND CURTIS IN UNISON (CONT'D)

*I say baby, my sweet ba-bee, my
baby, you're the one...*

He and MARY banter back and forth, trying to recapture that template for their song.

CURTIS

*Oh, baby, I don't want to leave,
but I gotta go, now*

MARY

*Well, if you leave it'll be the
last time. You best get your hat
and coat then.*

CURTIS

*Aw, baby, I thought it was over but
I...I don't wanna go...*

MARY

*Oooh, come on back, come on back to
me, sweet friend.*

They look at each other and chuckle. MARY suddenly coughs.

The producer hands her some water, she nods her gratitude.

TIME LAPSE as they are now recording. MARY'S voice is not strong; she can't reach certain notes. The producer gets up, takes his headphones off.

PRODUCER

Let's take a break. I'll have my
girl make you some tea with honey.
It's this damn bloody English
humidity. Does it to everybody.

He walks out of the studio. CURTIS looks at MARY both
chagrined and worried.

CURTIS

Mary, you still haven't seen a
doctor?

MARY

Now you know we don't have money
for no doctors. We can barely feed
Sugar. Besides, it's lymph nodes
from the way I sing. Everyone tells
me that.

CURTIS

Everyone isn't a doctor. Maybe you
shouldn't be singing.

MARY puts her hands on her hips, cocks her head sideways at
him.

MARY

Curtis, how we gonna live if I
don't work?

EXT. SOUND RECORDERS MUSIC STUDIO IN HOLLYWOOD. /INT. STUDIO-
DAY

Back in the studio a bit later, MARY sings a bit better but
still struggles with notes she usually hits.

She attempts to telephone home several times. Through the
phone receiver we can hear..

RECORDED MESSAGE

The number you have dialed is not
in service. Please check the number
and dial again.

As if on cue, Curtis enters the studio from outside, carrying
what appears to be soup containers and Chinese carryout food.
He looks at Mary who appears miffed.

CURTIS

Got you some Wonton soup, love.
Hey, what's wrong?

MARY

You can't fool me, Curt. I know we
been evicted. I tried calling the
house, but the phone's dead.

CURTIS hangs his head in sadness. His body language confirms
her worst fears.

MARY (CONT'D)

First my car, now the apartment...

He nods, shakes his head in sadness.

MARY (CONT'D)

So now we're at Mama's.

CURTIS

Look, don't you worry about a
thing, now, y'hear? We can always
get a new car or a new place. We
just gotta get you better.

He squeezes her hand with his left and rubs her back with his
right, then kisses her cheek. She smiles, wearily, closing
her eyes for just a moment.

INT. DOCTOR'S OFFICE. SEVERAL DAYS LATER DAY

MARY and CURTIS are seated. The doctor walks in, his face
grave in expression. MARY's facial expression tells us that
she knows immediately the news is bad. He places an X-ray on
the clip and turns its light on to point out the mass.

MARY

Shit.

DOCTOR

I am so sorry, Mary, but it looks
like you have a cancerous tumor on
your larynx. I would recommend you
have it surgically removed since it
appears not to have spread,
although we will remove the lymph
nodes as a precautionary measure.

CURTIS

Hear that, Mar? You can be cured.

MARY

Doctor, I am a singer. I remember from science class in high school that the voice box is part of the larynx. So you are telling me I can't sing or talk again?

DOCTOR

Oh, you can learn to talk again through an artificial voicebox. Singing...well...

MARY

Isn't there any other alternative?

DOCTOR

Yes, you can elect to have radiation on the larynx. It's a bit rough, but it has worked for some, and your voice will remain intact.

MARY nods her approval of that.

MARY

Radiation it is, then, Doc. That's my decision.

The doctor nods his understanding, exits quickly. Curtis appears quite concerned.

CURTIS

Mary! You are gambling with your life, honey!

MARY

Curtis, singing is my life! That is all I know how to do, and it is what supports our family.

CURTIS

Yeah, our family and a whole lot of other families.

MARY is clearly hurting and he goes over to her to wrap his arms around her. They cry together.

DAYS LATER. EXT.-DETROIT THEATER /INT.DRESSING ROOM

MARY is combing her daughter SUGAR'S hair. They are backstage in MARY'S dressing room.

MARY

Baby girl, Mama is going away for a few days. I want you to stay with Grandma Womack, okay?

SUGAR

But Mama, I always go with you and Papa.

MARY

Well, not this time, honey. Mama is...well, I'm sick and I need to get better.

SUGAR

But mama you can just rest at home. Daddy will take good care of you like when I'm sick.

MARY

C'mon, Sugar. We have to go on stage. Remember what your lines are?

SUGAR

Yes, Mommy.

MARY hugs her, trying not to tear up. They hear MARY's name and smile at one another, walking onto the stage. MARY picks up the mic and places it in front of SUGAR'S tiny mouth.

SUGAR (CONT'D)

Ladies and gentlemen, my mommy, Mary Wells!

The crowd roars its approval, as Sugar scurries back to the waiting arms of Grandma Wells, who is applauding her. MARY begins to lip synch an upbeat tempo song...

MARY

*Operator, Operator I'm so glad that
you rang my home Operator,
Operator, I'm so glad that you
found me home...*

INT. MARY AND CURTIS' KITCHEN.

Mary is taking a bubble bath as sugar is blowing bubbles with a wand, laughing at the larger ones. Mary is smiling broadly at her daughter, as she obviously is trying to imprint a fun memory with her before her operation.

The telephone rings on the kitchen wall. Curtis walks into the room to pick it up.

CURTIS

Hello?

His expression is one of sudden but pleasant surprise.

Bruce Springsteen! Oh man, how are you? Mary's in the tub with our daughter.

(laughing) Yeah, right? Oh wow...

(sotto voce) Listen, she can't do studio work right now. I'm really sorry. I know she would if she could. She's a big fan, too. Hey thanks, man. Maybe someday we can make it happen.

EXT. KENNETH NORRIS JR. CANCER CENTER USC CAMPUS. NEXT DAY/INT. ONCOLOGY RADIATION TREATMENT ROOM

Mary looks terrified before her radiation treatment. The doctor attempts to reassure and calm her. She smiles, flirts with him a bit. CURTIS is pacing outside in the waiting room, unable to sit still. MARY then has a breathing tube inserted.

Her lungs are then drained of excessive fluid buildup as tubes are inserted into the chest cavity between the ribs.

INT. MUSIC STUDIO IN NEW JERSEY-AFTERNOON

We see singer BRUCE SPRINGSTEEN reading *Variety*, with a scarf-coifed Steve van Zandt strumming a guitar and tuning it beside him. Other band members are setting up and testing their instruments. They are ostensibly preparing to record or rehearse music.

BRUCE SPRINGSTEEN

Holy shit! This is terrible! Check this out, man: 'Singer Mary Wells, often regaled as the First Lady of Motown for having financially built the company with such hits as My Guy, Two Lovers, The One Who Really Loves You, and You Beat Me to the Punch, is said to be diagnosed with cancer of the larynx, but has no money to pay her medical bills estimated to be over \$140,000.' That is fucking ridiculous, man! How can she have all that gold and be broke?

STEVE VAN ZANDT

How? You know how these fuckers do it, why you even askin' that question? She probably got screwed out of those songs years ago.

SPRINGSTEEN looks visibly angry. He is thoughtful for a moment, then looks at VAN ZANDT, eyes on fire with true passion for a cause.

BRUCE SPRINGSTEEN

I don't know if I told you this before, but I offered to do a duet with her on *Human Touch*, but Curtis Womack, her old man said she couldn't perform right now. Now I understand, man, Wow.

STEVE VAN ZANDT

You're on the board of the Rhythm and Blues Foundation. Get them to foot it.

BRUCE SPRINGSTEEN

Nah, artists only get a grant of maybe five grand tops. She needs a lot more than that.

TV STUDIO ENTERTAINMENT TONIGHT

MARY is talking about her illness in a near whisper to the host of Entertainment tonight.

HOST

So is it true you smoked two packs of cigarettes a day?

MARY

Yes, it's true. I smoked two packs
a day.

(She looks directly into
the TV camera.)

And I would urge everyone seeing
this to not laugh off cancer
warnings on cigarette packages. Get
help and stop smoking.

INT. HOTEL-LOS ANGELES, CA. PRESS CONFERENCE

BRUCE SPRINGSTEEN is at the microphone, as the press is
taking photos and scribbling notes. Flashbulbs abound. WE SEE
MARY and CURTIS watching him from the motel TV.

BRUCE SPRINGSTEEN

And so I am donating \$10,000 to
assist Mary Wells in her courageous
fight against cancer. I urge all
artists, especially those of you
who have been blessed financially
from your album sales and gigs, to
do the same, to give what you can
to help this dear lady and great
performer whose music lifted me,
lifted us all up back in the 60s
and helped define the Motown Sound.

INT. SPORTS ARENA LOS ANGELES BILLBOARD: "BENEFIT CONCERT FOR
MARY WELLS"-ROD STEWART, DIONNE WARWICK, MARTHA REEVES

Onstage, Springsteen is performing *The Promised Land*.

BRUCE SPRINGSTEEN

*Well there's a dark cloud rising
from the desert floor
Packed my bags heading straight
into the storm
Gonna be a twister to blow
everything down
That ain't got the faith to stand
its ground
Blow away the dreams that tear you
apart
Blow away the dreams that break
your heart
Blow away the lies that leave you
nothing but lost and broken-
hearted...*

EXT.- SMALL STUCCO BUNGALOW IN LEIMERT PARK SECTION OF LOS ANGELES. GENEVA WELLS' NEW HOME. DAYS LATER...

Geneva opens the front door as a US postal carrier holds a large bag, presumably for Mary. Geneva turns her head around to yell for help from Curtis.

GENEVA

Curt, come quickly! I need your help here.

Curtis sprints toward the front door, his eyes widening at the sight of the large mailbag.

CURTIS

Wow! All this for Mary?

The postal worker nods, then departs.

CURTIS (CONT'D)

Man, oh man! Now ain't this something else, Geneva?

Genevea shakes her head in disbelief...

MONTAGE

Curtis opens the bag onto the dining room table, as CLOSEUPS reveal a cascading mountain of personal checks to help MARY, especially from other artists: Bonnie Raitt, Diana Ross, Aretha Franklin, each for \$15,000/ Rod Stewart and The Temptations, \$15,000. We see the names but not amounts on checks from Frank Sinatra, Martha Reeves, Robert de Niro, and Phil Collins. Berry Gordy's for \$25,000.

CURTIS (CONT'D)

Berry Gordy personally signed a check for \$25,000.

GENEVA

Hell, he should have given her back her....

(Curtis cuts her off)

CURTIS

He didn't HAVE to do anything. I mean, Jesus! \$25,000! God bless him.

GENEVA

Just the same, she'd never be homeless if she'd had her Motown money.

CURTIS

Ok, so he was mad as hell that she left. And yes, she was owed more than she got. But Mary herself will tell you that she made that decision for her own self-respect. She is a very strong woman, Geneva. And you wonderfully raised her to be that way.

Geneva sits in a chair and puts her head in her hands as she begins to sob. Curtis goes over to her, hugs and comforts her.

CURTIS (CONT'D)

I'm going to stay with Mary at a motel next to County USC Medical Center. You'll be here for Sugar, won't you?

Geneva nods. Curtis hugs her tightly, tears suddenly welling up in his eyes.

EXT. DOWNTOWN L.A. MOTEL

CURTIS helps her clean her breathing tube with a toothbrush before reinserting it. MARY has difficulty talking. She can barely whisper.

MARY

I'm so tired.

CURTIS

I know, I know, baby. Why don't you just rest? That's what your body needs now.

He walks her over to the bed, helps her get under the covers, tucks her in gently. He kisses her forehead, rubs her forearm. She closes her eyes and is quickly sound asleep. He is a bit taken aback by the rapidity of her sleepiness, when there is a light knock at the motel room door. He gets up to answer it, opens the door, and there is Maye, who is about to walk in when CURTIS stops her.

CURTIS (CONT'D)

Maye, honey, Mary's just fallen off to sleep. She's not doing well today. I don't want to awaken her just yet. And... well, this whole money thing, being evicted, having her car repo-ed, the medical bills, it just isn't helping her.

Maye seems shaken but straightens and takes CURTIS by the arm to talk with him outside the door, which CURTIS has mostly closed behind him.

MAYE

Curt, I have some good news. AFTRA is going to cover MARY'S medical bills. And..

She reaches into her purse and brings out a letter to show CURTIS.

MAYE (CONT'D)

And Bruce's press conference raised over \$55,000 for y'all to live on. His concert funds and other money hasn't even come in yet.

CURTIS wipes tears from his eyes, as he looks at the letter, overcome with joy. MAYE hugs him, reassures him.

INT. HOSPITAL BED NIGHTTIME

MARY is sedated but slowly opening her eyes. CURTIS is literally by her side, holding her hand, kissing her forehead, cheeks, earlobes. MARY has obviously had a tracheotomy as well as lung draining with tubes between her ribcages. CAMERA PANS AWAY from MARY, as we hear the gurgling and beeping of hospital machines in the stillness of nighttime.

EXT. A SUBURBAN PARK IN LOS ANGELES

SUGAR is playing on the slide at the park, MARY and CURTIS are holding hands sitting on the bench, watching her.

MARY

She's getting so big, our baby girl.

CURTIS

She is.

MARY

Curtis, I want her to grow up strong and independent. Not to be needing a man...and... to just see people as they are, not as she'd like them to be.

CURTIS

If she learns anything from us,
it's to be real from the get-go.

MARY

Yes, and not wait to say what's on
her mind, or, in her heart.

MARY looks at him, he looks at her. MARY looks out at the
park, in the sky, and back to the park.

CURTIS

What?

MARY

I was just wondering where all the
birds have gone. I don't see birds
in LA, anymore...

CURTIS appears startled by her observation, disturbed by the
sadness of her tone. MARY, meanwhile, spotting a transient
pushing a shopping cart down the asphalt walkway, grabs a
\$5.00 bill from her purse and hands it to the man. CURTIS
continues to appear saddened.

MARY AND CURTIS' NEW LA HOME-MORNING

WE OPEN WITH a CLOSE-UP of a USA Today story "Singer Mary
Wells' larynx cancer gone." From the newspaper article
resting upon the coffee table, we see a mug of fresh coffee
picked up by CURTIS. MARY is sipping the same.

Whereas CURTIS is in a robe, MARY is dressed in a lovely
orange jumpsuit, her pageboy highlighted with golden streaks,
her make up flawless. We see a suitcase in the corner.

CURTIS

Where you off to this lovely
morning, Sunshine?

MARY

Honey, you must have forgotten that
I'm going to speak to Congress
about funding cancer research. Maye
is driving me to the airport and
when I get to Washington, the Vice
President has arranged a limo to
take me to the capital. and from
there we're...Oh, my God!

CURTIS

Baby, your voice is back! Oh wow!
Maybe you won't have to lip synch
your music after all.

She starts to sing a few words of *My Guy*, and they both joyously laugh, dance around just a bit as they embrace. WE SEE Maye as she beeps her horn and rolls down the window to wave at the two of them as they step outside onto the front porch Curtis carrying her suitcase. MARY grabs her purse from the nearby kitchen counter and moves quickly through the living room, where CURTIS meets her at the door with her suitcase.

CURTIS (CONT'D)

Here, let me carry your bag to the
car, sweetheart.

Once at the taxi they embrace again, and kiss good-bye.

MARY

Don't forget to pick Sugar up at 2
o'clock today for her dentist
appointment.

CURTIS

Half that kid's teeth are out, but
you gone clean the few that are
left.

He shakes his head in mock exasperation, both laugh.

CURTIS (CONT'D)

I love you Mary Esther Wells. And
while I wish we could go back in
time and retrieve those lost years
when we let others keep us apart, I
thank God every day now that I wake
up next to you.

Mary looks at him tearfully, shaking her head, seemingly unable to responsively express her thoughts adequately.

She wraps her arms around Curtis who kisses her multiple times, both their tears freely flowing.

SCENE ONE ON THE CAPITOL STEPS

MARY, having climbed the Capitol steps, is now having difficulty breathing. A page brings her a wheelchair, but she waves him off. He escorts her to the chamber, brings her water, which she gulps down.

CONGRESSIONAL CHAIRMAN
Good morning, Madame. Kindly state
your name and occupation for the
assembled here.

MARY moves very close to the microphone, her voice hoarse.

She takes a quick sip of water.

MARY
Good morning. My name is Mary
Esther Wells, and I am--or was-- a
professional singer.

Everyone recognizes her, and there is a simultaneous feeling
of both awe and pathos conveyed in their stares.

CONGRESSIONAL CHAIRMAN
Now, this is, as you know, a
hearing on Congressional Bill 96.
875, additional federal funding for
cancer research. Now the Committee
understand that you have been
battling cancer yourself, and we
would like to ask you to please
share with this committee, Ms.
Wells, your experiences and
requests in this regard.

MARY shuffles her stack of papers, clears her throat and
begins to speak in a calm, slow voice, albeit a hoarse one.

MARY
I am here today to speak on behalf
of the voiceless, even though I
myself only have half a voice left,
if that. Last year I was diagnosed
with cancer of the larynx. It was
the worst day of my life.

MARY (CONT'D)
Here I am, a professional singer
since the age of 17, and I am being
told the voice that I used to make
a living for me and my four
children was coming to its demise.
My doctor gave me two choices,
complete removal of my larynx and
lymph nodes, which meant talking
through a voice box, or extreme
radiation, in which my whole immune
system was poisoned for months
while the cancer was eradicated.

(MORE)

MARY (CONT'D)

For me the choice was between despair at living a life with no voice, and hope that maybe I might sing again, but fear that my cancer will return. I wonder why I am so limited in my choices, and I realize it is because science, which was my favorite subject in high school, by the way, is behind the eight ball. I am told only federal funding can spur future grants at colleges and universities to study oncology and come up with better treatment, if not cures, not just for my type of cancer, but for all cancers. As the mother of four children, I think about the horror of mothers watching their babies go through what I went through and...

She becomes not only a bit emotional but is gasping for breath. The page gives her more water. Mary cannot talk. A woman seated next to her picks up her last page, then reads the rest of MARY'S statement for her.

WOMAN

I have to assume responsibility for my cancer as I was a two-pack-a-day smoker, and I didn't listen to those around me who begged me to quit for years. I am here today to urge others not to be as foolish as I was, and to stop smoking now. And to those who have cancer, through no fault of their own, I am here today to urge you to keep the faith. I can't cheer you on with all of my voice, but I can encourage you. To this Congress, I pray to motivate you with all my heart and soul and whispers.

The chamber erupts in raucous applause as they give her a standing ovation. Tears are everywhere. Everyone rushes to hug Mary.

ESTABLISHING EXTERIOR HOSPITAL

INTERIOR HOSPITAL ROOM-DAY. MARY'S BEDSIDE.

MARY is dying. Motown personalities are outside the door, in the waiting room, consoling CURTIS. MARY's MOTHER is crying, and MAMA WOMACK begins walking with SUGAR to the cafeteria.

Inside the room, MAYE is having a final moment with her lifelong friend, holding her hand. MARY'S eyes are mostly closed. MAYE is softly crying.

MAYE

Mary, my sweet, sweet friend, I
want you to know that I will make
sure the kids are okay, so don't
you worry. I am so grateful for you
in my life all these years, and I
love you.

(Whispering)

I love you.

(quietly sobbing)

MARY

(inaudible)

I love you, too.

Mary closes her eyes. Maye sees Curtis standing at the foot of the bed, tears rolling down his cheeks like a jet stream. She hands him a tissue; they hug, both crying into the other's shoulder. Maye leaves abruptly, on the precipice of sobbing uncontrollably.

Mary opens her eyes, barely able to draw them at half-mast. She motions for Curtis to come close to her. She draws him close as she barely whispers, struggling to get the words out.

MARY (CONT'D)

I never...knew...what...love could
do...till...I... had you...

Curtis' head is bowed as he sobs silently. Mary closes her eyes and is presumably passing away.

EXT./INT. A BAPTIST CHURCH IN DETROIT. DAYS LATER. MORNING

STEVIE WONDER

(singing)

*When peace like a river attended my
way,
When song of life's seas billows
rolls,
Whatever my lot, thou hath taught
me to say,*

(MORE)

STEVIE WONDER (CONT'D)
*It is well, it is well, it is well,
 with my soul...*

A massive funeral celebration for MARY WELLS: packed church, gospel choir, all of Motown, her family, friends. We see LITTLE RICHARD playing piano, and suddenly STEVIE, SMOKEY and all of the MOTOWN Family, plus THE CHANTELS conclude the service:

MOTOWN FAMILY AND MUSICAL FRIENDS
 "Nothing you can say could tear me
 away from my guy..."

The congregation is singing, stomping and clapping along.

Super: "MARY WELLS DIED ON JULY 26, 1992."

"SHE LEFT BEHIND FOUR CHILDREN, STACEY, WHO IS MARRIED TO CELEBRITY CHEF JEFF COOKS, CECIL JR. (MEECH), HARRY, (SHORTY), AND SUGAR, AS WELL AS HER PARTNER CURTIS WOMACK AND MOTHER GENEVA."

"CECIL JR. IS A SUCCESSFUL HIP HOP AND RAP RECORD PRODUCER."

"HARRY, KNOWN AS SHORTY IS A RAPPER. SUGAR IS A SINGER, A STYLIST, AND MOTHER TO A TEENAGE SON."

"CURTIS' SON CURTIS JR. ("BINKY") IS A TALENTED ARTIST, SESSION GUITARIST AND PRODUCER."

"IN 1992 MARY'S ESTATE SUCCESSFUL SETTLED A COPYRIGHT LAWSUIT AGAINST MOTOWN RECORDS WHO HAD BEEN REPORTING ONLY HER US ROYALTIES AND HAD USED HER IMAGE WITHOUT PERMISSION TO SELL RE-RELEASES."

"MAYE JAMES-HOLLER, AFTER A SUCCESSFUL CAREER AS MARY WELLS' PERSONAL ASSISTANT, BECAME A PROMOTIONAL DIRECTOR FOR SCEPTER RECORDS, THE FIRST BLACK WOMAN TO HOLD THAT TITLE, AND A MUSIC DIRECTOR AT WBLS RADIO IN NEW YORK. SHE PASSED IN DECEMBER 2025, PRECEDED IN DEATH BY HUSBAND STEPHEN HOLLER. MAYE'S DAUGHTER CRYSTAL IS A MARKETING CEO WITH BET MEDIA GROUP."

WHILE MOST MOTOWN PIONEERS ARE IN THE ROCK 'N ROLL HALL OF FAME, MARY WELLS, WHO WAS THE FIRST HIGHLY SUCCESSFUL SINGER FOR HER COMPANY, OFTEN REFERRED TO AS "THE FIRST LADY OF MOTOWN," IS NOT.

MARY'S FAMILY, SADLY, HAS NOT BENEFITTED FROM THE OVER HALF-CENTURY POPULARITY OF HER SONGS, DUE TO LOOPHOLES IN US COPYRIGHT LAWS.

SUPER: FOR MARY AND MAYE, WHOSE LOYALTY AND FRIENDSHIP ARE AN INSPIRATION TO ALL. TO CURTIS AND SUGAR WOMACK, WHO WERE SO GRACIOUS IN ASSISTING WITH THIS FILM.