

GRILLED CHEESE VIRGIN

by
Steven Arvanites

Steven Arvanites
400 west 43 street #38T
New York, NY 10036
© 2008
(212) 459-4222

FADE IN:

TITLE CARD: INSPIRED BY A TRUE STORY

INT. HEAVEN'S GATE MOTEL - MANHATTAN - DAY

Roach motel. Peeled walls, a light bulb, one bed, two writhing bodies.

ALICIA, (25), a shapely knockout, lies on her back, staring at a MOIST FISSURE in the ceiling.

She averts her eyes as CHUBBY, (39), pumps on top of her, dripping sweat onto her face. She grins and bares it.

As her CUSTOMER HAMMERS AWAY, she cocks her head, squinting.

CLOSE ON - THE CEILING CRACK

It looks like something. Someone. A *face*?

The man's breathing accelerates. Short, shallow inhales.

ALICIA

Yeah! Oh, yeah! Bring it home,
Champ!

CHUBBY

(gasping)
Can't breathe. Took Viagra and I--

ALICIA

No! You're the only regular I got.
Don't die on me. Don't croak!

Alicia rolls him off.

On her knees, she folds one hand over the other, RHYTHMICALLY COMPRESSING his chest.

CHUBBY

Oww! What are you doing?

ALICIA

I saw it on a hospital show.

Chubby SHOVES her off and clutches the crucifix at his neck.

CHUBBY

Pray with me. Please?

Alicia is taken back. *She doesn't do prayer.*

ALICIA

How 'bout we pray your cell phone
works instead?

She reaches for the flip phone in his pants pocket.

EXT. HEAVEN'S GATE MOTEL - DAY

An ambulance pulls to the curb. Two EMT's search for the
correct address. Alicia hitches her thumb skyward.

ALICIA

Upstairs. Room 301.

With their gear in tow, They RACE into the motel.

A muscled Latino, NESTOR, (22), with a crescent scar on his
cheek and hair tucked tight in a do-rag approaches.

NESTOR

What up, Alicia?

Fishing through her purse.

ALICIA

Tryin' to find a phone booth so I
can turn into Super Hooker.

He produces a Ziploc bag of packaged pills and powders.

NESTOR

No doubt. I got Special K, Tweak,
OC's, Mexican Crack, Liquid E,
Hard Candy, Vicodin, Ephedra, and
Anabolic Steroids. What ya takin'?

ALICIA

A grilled cheese sandwich?

NESTOR

(clueless)

I can get that.

EXT. WEST 163 STREET - DAY

Spanish Harlem.

Salsa beat. Vibrant. Zesty.

Kids play stickball.

Old men crowd around television sets in open-air bodegas
watching the Mets game. Bottles of Presidente Beer sweat
through brown paper bags.

Tattooed Boricuas, in muscle cars with tricked-out speakers, cruise.

Alicia SASHAYS down the block. Catcalls and offers abound.

ALICIA

Let's see the bills, muchachos!

She turns the corner.

INT. OUR LADY DELI - DUSK

The deli is a VERITABLE SHRINE to the Virgin Mary. Her image on the walls, in the deli case, adorning a behind-the-counter altar, etc.

Behind the counter, SAL GENETTI, (46), hirsute and stocky, hands an envelope to a muscled thug. We will know him as GOON FRANKIE, (26).

FILOMENA GENETTI, (41), a furrowed brow and gaunt fervently prays with rosaries in hand through the exchange.

The bruiser pockets the pay-out. He grabs a "free" Snickers and ogles Alicia as she enters.

ALICIA

What did the goon want, Mr. Genetti?

MR. GENETTI

Nothing. It's nothing.

(beat)

The usual, my dear?

ALICIA

Ya know it. Extra grease. Oils the hinges.

Alicia pivots to Mrs. Genetti at the register. She ignores the girl.

With an approving nod from the owner, Alicia ducks into the bathroom. Mrs. Genetti's prayers get louder.

BATHROOM

Alicia reapplies lipstick. Fluffs her dyed hair. Popping the toilet paper rod, she jams a half used roll into her purse.

DELI COUNTER

Mr. Genetti pushes a greasy paper bag across the counter.

ALICIA

And gim'me three instant lotteries
please. Got the *Singing Cow* one?

She pays with a twenty. Mrs. Genetti returns two singles for
change.

MRS. GENETTI

You owe us from last week.

Alicia offers a weak smile. With her lunch in hand, she walks
to the door.

MRS. GENETTI (O.S.)

Sal, get me the Lysol.

EXT. WEST 168TH STREET - HALF HOUR LATER

Sitting on a stoop, Alicia opens her tinfoil lunch like a
precious heirloom.

A GRILLED CHEESE SANDWICH, golden brown and oozing oil like
a grounded super tanker.

She pulls a bottle of Tabasco sauce from her purse and douses
the greasy concoction.

She takes a bite. *Heaven!*

With her chipped fingernail, she SCRATCHES OFF the first
Singing Cow lottery ticket.

--Nothing

Again.

--Nothing

All losers.

A TEENAGE MOM parks her stroller and uses a pay phone.

The gurgling TODDLER and Alicia lock eyes. With her mother
distracted, Alicia crinkles her nose for amusement. The tyke
giggles.

She puffs one cheek then another. Same result. The pièce de
résistance? She crosses her eyeballs.

The mom jerks the stroller, positioning the baby out of sight.

Hurt, Alicia abandons her stoop and struts around the corner.

WEST 169TH STREET

Loud Music. Alicia halts. *Flashdance*, the 80s mega-hit, blasts from an unseen car.

"First, when there's nothing but a slow glowing dream/That your fear seems to hide deep inside your mind..."

ALICIA

Shit!

She TOSSES her half-eaten sandwich. Bolts the opposite way.

A Mercedes-Benz SL500 passes a red light. It speeds up, stopping besides Alicia.

Its tinted back window disappears. The song blaring.

ANGEL, (34), sits in the back seat. Shaved head, eyes heavy-lidded with dark circles from too much of everything. The driver is the same GOON FRANKIE from the Our Lady deli.

ANGEL

Hey, whore.

She walks faster.

ANGEL

Come on, baby. Get in.

ALICIA

Rather walk.

ANGEL

Come on, we can go "skiing." Get all banged up. Like we used to.

(difficult)

Like havin' ya around, Alicia.

ALICIA

I'm off you and all the shit. I like it better in the fresh air.

A greasy head pops up from the passenger seat. TORA, (22), with a face hallowed from heroin, mumbles--

TORA

We at White Castle?

ALICIA

Hey, Tora.

TORA

(to Alicia)

I want to order me the Crave Case.
All cheeseburgers. Crave--

He pulls out his gun, waving it like a flag.

ANGEL

It's always loaded. Always!

Tora cowers. Back to Alicia.

ANGEL

(sincere)

Why don't ya wanna get back with
me?

Alicia shakes her head, walks off. Angel percolates,
following her with the car.

ANGEL

I keep the pimps off you, whore!

ALICIA

Didn't ask for that.

ANGEL

Okay. You're right, baby. You're
right.

He turns up his music.

*"Pictures come alive/You can dance right through your life/
What a feeling/I can really have it all.."*

Angel speeds away. Alicia is shaken.

EXT. PONTIAC FIREBIRD - EVENING

The car BOUNCES in a vacant lot. The windows steamed.

Kids construct a "military bunker" from cardboard
refrigerator boxes and trash at the far end.

INSIDE THE PONTIAC

SUSHI, (22), a pre-op Filipino tranny, bends over the front
seat. A BUILT GUY pumps away from behind.

Her face and body are passable. Natural breasts courtesy of
off-street hormones. Only her Adam's apple betrays the
illusion.

Sushi's face is SHOVED RHYTHMICALLY into a child's car seat with a smiling mickey mouse covering.

She holds onto rosary beads, mumbling a *Hail Mary*, as she gets banged.

SUSHI

Hail Mary, full of grace. Our Lord
is with thee...ooh, cum, baby. And
blessed is the fruit of thy
womb...aah, I know you can
cum...Mother of God pray for us
sinners--

BUILT GUY

Shut up with that shit. I'm gonna
bust my nutt!

(grunting)

Gettin' close. Gettin' close!

EXT. PARKING LOT - EVENING

Alicia meanders to the parked car. One eye out for passing tricks.

She waves to her friend through the steamed back window.

INSIDE CAR

Sushi rolls her eyes. Continues to pray.

A growl. A grunt. It's over. She looks to heaven and mouths,
"Thank You."

EXT. PONTIAC FIREBIRD - CONTINUING

Sushi tumbles out the automobile, tugging on her dress.

The car's tires spin-out, spitting gravel over the two girls.

ALICIA

Asshole!

SUSHI

Jesus, Mary and Joseph, bridge and
tunnel guys always take forever!

ALICIA

You pay our electric yet, Sushi?

SUSHI

Today. Promise.

They wade through garbage.

ALICIA
Promises don't keep the lights
on. Where ya goin' now?

SUSHI
Holy Cross. I can still make
confession with Father Pete.

ALICIA
Priests should come with warning
labels.

Sushi pinches her arm. A spit-polished Toyota Celica rolls
past. Alicia analyzes.

ALICIA
Jersey license plates. City job.
Second mortgage. Sexless PTA wife.
I'm on it.

Alicia saunters over to the drooling suburban trick.

SUSHI
Don't forget Saturday. I'm making
my Confirmation at the church.
Don't forget!

Alicia waves her off.

EXT. ALICIA AND SUSHI'S APARTMENT BUILDING - ESTABLISHING

Shabby building. Fire escapes are populated with overheated
residents and their flapping laundry.

INT. LOBBY - NIGHT

Alicia pushes the broken street door. A narrow lobby with a
wall of mailboxes.

She is greeted by ERNESTO PEREZ, (16), and his mother, YAJIRA
PEREZ, (40), the landlady. Edged hair and beard, he smiles at
Alicia and winks. Yajira, squat and chesty, catches the
exchange.

YAJIRA
Two months rent! Where is it?

ALICIA
Stop barkin'! You'll get your
money, Yajira.

Alicia opens her box. Mail tumbles out. Bills and the usual
crap except--

FOR A MAGAZINE.

CLOSE ON - MAGAZINE COVER

FIELD AND STREAM

Alicia bounces with excitement. She rushes the stairs to the first landing.

The door to apartment #1B is ajar. Alicia passes. LUIS TRUJILLO, (28), emerges. Rangy with a MANGLED LEG. Dog tags splayed across his USMC T-shirt.

He's been planning this rendezvous for hours.

LUIS

Hey, Alicia.

ALICIA

Hi, Luis. How's the leg?

LUIS

Hurts the same. You good?

ALICIA

It's like it was yesterday, but add on twenty-four hours.

She's halfway to the next landing. Luis limps over to the iron banister.

LUIS

Uh, Alicia. What d'ya say? Um, Tuesday. Grab a slice? Maybe a movie?

ALICIA

Ya askin' me on date, Luis?

LUIS

Well, uh, yeah.

ALICIA

I don't do dates.

She's out of sight.

LUIS

Hang?

ALICIA (O.S.)

Hangin' don't pay my bills.

INT. ALICIA AND SUSHI'S APARTMENT - NIGHT

Alicia bounds inside. The apartment is cheery. Too many religious candelas are perched on shelves and end tables.

Strands of Christmas lights twinkle over the living room ceiling. Enormous neon hued pillows obscure the couch.

Alicia beelines for her bedroom.

BEDROOM

She pulls her earnings from her bra, rolling the too few bills into a tight roll.

Tugging off the back of her broken television, she pulls A BLACK COSMETIC CASE.

Alicia unzips and adds to her meager stash. She pauses and stares at a dog-eared greeting card with a pink baby stork.

CLOSE ON - UNUSED GREETING CARD

It reads: *"It's a Girl!"*

She returns her loot and the card to their hiding place.

Flopping on her bed, she grabs a pair of scissors and skips to the back of her magazine.

Her eyes scan the page. She zeros in a one advert, slicing up the page.

Reaching under her mattress, she pulls a ripped manila envelope. Empties the contents onto the bed.

Alicia proudly adds her newest clipping to the growing pile.

The electricity shuts off.

ALICIA

Sushi!

INT. HOLY CROSS CHURCH - EVENING

Peeling rafters. Empty pews. Spectacular stained glass.

Sushi enters through the vestibule. She covers her head. Dips her fingers in the holy water font, crossing herself and curtseys to the altar.

AT THE CONFESSIONAL

Sushi waits. A PIOUS WOMAN steps out of the confessional.

Sushi smiles. The old bag glowers at the she-male, turning her head as she passes.

Sushi sits in the confessional booth. Closes the curtain.

INSIDE THE CONFESSIONAL

A tiny, dark space. A grated, ornate barrier between sinner and redeemer. The partition slides open.

SUSHI

Forgive me, Father for like I have sinned a lot. It's been three days since my last confession.

A soothing voice on the opposite side. We will know him as FATHER PETE, (39), pudgy and unkept.

FATHER PETE (O.S.)

Confess your sins.

SUSHI

I used the Lord's name in vain. I didn't pay our electric bill when I said I would because I bought hormones and syringes instead. I've had anal sex with thirteen men over the weekend. But they all paid. Just business.

Silence.

FATHER PETE (O.S.)

I worry about you Sushi. What you do is dangerous. Very--

SUSHI

I use condoms every time except for blow jobs. Guys don't like it, it doesn't feel the same, ya know?

FATHER PETE (O.S.)

No Sushi, I don't know.

(beat)

Think about your future.

SUSHI

I do. I do. After I stop hookin', I'm applyin' to all the best retailin' shops. I wanna do make-overs. Like on TV.

FATHER PETE (O.S.)
Why wait? Get out now. You condemn
your mortal soul each time you
perform--

Sushi tears.

FATHER PETE (O.S.)
You're a smart...person. You can
do better.

SUSHI
I'm bad. I'm so bad.

FATHER PETE (O.S.)
Say twelve Hail Mary's. And five
Our Father's.

SUSHI
No! Eighteen Hail Mary's I want
the Virgin to hear me!

FATHER PETE (O.S.)
Nineteen then!

SUSHI
Bless you, Father.

FATHER PETE (O.S.)
I absolve you of your sins. In the
name of the Father, the Son, and
the Holy Ghost.

SUSHI
How come Mary doesn't get top
billing too?

FATHER PETE (O.S.)
Go in peace, my child.

OUTSIDE THE CONFESSIONAL

Sushi emerges, smiling broadly at the next sinner. He enters
the confessional and pulls the curtain.

INSIDE THE CONFESSIONAL

Sins are laid bare by DR. HERNANDEZ, (49), balding and
bespectacled.

DR. HERNANDEZ
...and I used the Lord's name in
vain. And I missed mass twice.

FATHER PETE

Your sins are forgiven, my son.
Three Hail Mary's and six Our
Father's.

DR. HERNANDEZ

Thank you, Father.

The gentleman rises.

FATHER PETE

Doctor Hernandez, sorry to bother
you but can I get...uhh--

DR. HERNANDEZ

More Vicodin?

FATHER PETE

My back is killing me and my
prescription ran out. Coaching
Holy Cross softball takes it out
of me.

DR. HERNANDEZ

But, I gave you three refills.

FATHER PETE

I know. I know. I...I lost the
bottle somewhere in left field. So
stupid. If you could--

DR. HERNANDEZ

I'll mail it over to you, tomorrow.

FATHER PETE

Write it out now?

The doctor hesitates, then produces his PRESCRIPTION PAD and
dashes off a Vicodin prescript.

The priest points to the grating. Annoyed, the doctor rolls
the prescription, and shoves it through the partition.

The doctor crosses himself, rises quickly--

FATHER PETE

By the power vested in me by the
church, I absolve you of--

But the man is gone.

Father Pete unrolls the prescription. He smooths the edges
of his paper salvation.

IN THE NAVE

SUSHI GENUFLECTS--

in front of a Virgin Mary statue. She commences her penance.

CLOSE ON - THE VIRGIN MARY'S FACE

SUSHI GASPS--

squeezes her throat, and looks up to the Virgin's blissful gaze.

INT. ALICIA AND SUSHI'S APARTMENT - NIGHT

Electricity restored.

Alicia retrieves a well-worn skillet stored in the oven, drops it on the stove, and turns on the gas.

CLOSE ON - KITCHEN TABLE

She lines up her supplies.

--WONDER BREAD

--BORDEN AMERICAN CHEESE SLICES

--I CAN'T BELIEVE IT'S NOT BUTTER

--TABASCO SAUCE RETRIEVED FROM HER PURSE

She assembles her grilled cheese sandwich with precision.

Margarine on the inside and out of the bread. Two slices of processed cheese, a splash of Tabasco sauce. An additional scoop of margarine into the red-hot pan.

She drops the sandwich. We hear the SIZZLE.

The door bursts open.

SUSHI
Alicia! Alicia!

Alicia jumps.

SUSHI
She spoke to me! The Virgin Mary!
She talked only just to me.

ALICIA

I had to walk to the check cashin' place and pay our electric. So next time, when you talk to the Virgin Mary, tell her to remind you to pay the fuckin' bills on time, will ya?

SUSHI

I was kneeling, saying my penance. And She spoke to me. I listened but couldn't hear what she was sayin'. I tried but--

ALICIA

It's that batch of hormones ya got from the Cuban. I told ya not to shoot up that shit. Your tits are big enough.

She flips her sandwich.

SUSHI

(distraught)

I couldn't understand her. Oh my God, what was she tellin' me? What?

Alicia plates her dinner. Sits at the table.

ALICIA

She was saying, "You stupid queen, pay the fuckin' electric bill!"

SUSHI

No blaspheming, please!

CLOSE ON - ALICIA'S MOUTH

She bites into the corner of her grilled cheese.

Sushi's eyes pop.

She screams, SMACKING the sandwich out the her friend's mouth.

It lands on the stove top.

ALICIA

What the--

SUSHI

The Virgin! She's on top your sandwich.

ALICIA

I swear Sushi, I'm gonna--

Sushi RUSHES to the stove, staring at the bitten grilled cheese.

Alicia pushes past her, reaching for her dinner.

Sushi GRABS her arm. They struggle.

It turns into a wrestling match!

Sushi pleads with her friend to look.

CLOSE ON - THE GRILLED CHEESE SANDWICH

Even with a bite missing there is a--

CRISPED PORTRAIT OF A VEILED, BENEVOLENT WOMAN.

The Virgin Mary?

SUSHI

You almost ate the Virgin Mary's head!

ALICIA

All I sees is my dinner. Gim'me my sandwich, bitch!

She grabs her food and raises it to her mouth.

Sushi NABS it. Alicia SNATCHES a butter knife, and holds it at Sushi's crotch.

ALICIA

Gim'me my sandwich, or you'll get ya sex change right now!

Sushi cradles her relic.

SUSHI

I'll give you everythin' I made today, all right? Everythin'!

She empties her purse, her bra, her underwear. Dumping about \$37 and change.

ALICIA

Coins?

SUSHI

Please don't eat her. I know She
come to us for a reason. It's a
sign.

Alicia sucks on her teeth. Pushing Sushi's money away--

ALICIA

Fine! Take my sandwich.

Sushi rejoices.

ALICIA

But, if Jesus pops up on my pork
chop--he's lunch. Got it?

Sushi doesn't listen. She floats into the living room.

LIVING ROOM

She rearranges her religious candelas; they are the usual
suspects: John the Baptist, Christ, Virgin Mary.

She places the soggy grilled cheese in the center of the
MAKESHIFT ALTAR. The sandwich folds under its weight.

Distraught, Sushi sprints into the bathroom.

Alicia moves closer to the altar. She squints, looking at the
crisped virgin. She shakes her head.

Returning, Sushi shoves her out of the way.

With reverence she PLACES THE SANDWICH INTO A CLEAR SNAP-TOP
SAFETY PIN CONTAINER. Cushioning it with puffs of cotton
balls.

SUSHI

This is your new home, Blessed
Mother.

ALICIA

Ya got internal issues. That's all
I'm sayin'.

Sushi lights all the candelas and prays.

Alicia opens the fridge, unscrews a jar of Kosher Dills, and
exits the apartment.

EXT. APARTMENT ROOF - NIGHT

Moonlight. Alicia snaps a pickle in her mouth. She enjoys the
crunch.

Water towers pepper her view. Laughter and arguing waft from the alley.

Luis opens the roof door. Alicia turns her head. He smiles and retreats.

ALICIA
Free roof.

He inches forward, his bad leg DRAGGING.

LUIS
Hot today, but I think tonight is cooling down.

Alicia bites another pickle.

LUIS
You like pickles?

ALICIA
No.

Confused.

LUIS
Oh. My mom used to put a pickle in my lunch box. P.B.&J. and a pickle.

ALICIA
Catholic school. Hot lunch.

LUIS
A good Catholic girl.

ALICIA
That's where I learned to give head. Why ya limp?

Uncomfortable, he shifts from his injured leg.

LUIS
Why ya askin'?

ALICIA
Forget it.

LUIS
Baghdad, first week, I.E.D. flipped my Humvee, crushed my foot.

ALICIA
I.E.D.?

LUIS
Improvised explosive device.

ALICIA
Shit. That sucks.

LUIS
Better than a body bag.

Alicia screws the lid on her pickles. She walks to the roof door.

LUIS
How about a movie next week? No dancin' though.

ALICIA
Listen, ya want a bang? I'll give you my military rate--20% off.

LUIS
Fuck that! I want a real date with you and me. Proper.

Off Alicia's intrigued look--

INT. OUR LADY DELI - NIGHT

CLOSE ON - FOUR LOTTERY TICKETS

Mr. Genetti spreads them like a royal flush on the counter.

Alicia smiles. The wife SCOWLS in the background, clutching her rosary.

EXT. HEAVEN'S GATE MOTEL - NIGHT

Alicia plies her trade. No takers. She SCRATCHES one of her lotteries with a key.

THREE MATCHING POTS OF GOLD - WINS \$1.

ALICIA
Holy shit! I won.

She tries her luck again.

THREE SINGING COWS - WINS \$5.

ALICIA
Three cows! Three cows!

Finally--

TIC-TAC-DOUGH IN A ROW - WINS \$20.

ALICIA
Tic-Tac-Dough!

Luck be a lady! Giddy, she fans her face with the winners.

EXT. ALLEY - NIGHT

NESTOR moans, teetering beside a dumpster. We can't see the source of his pleasure.

SUSHI (O.S.)
(mouth full of--)
This isn't what the Holy Mother
wants from me. I can do better.

Sushi rises from her knees. He pushes her head back down.

NESTOR
I didn't cum yet.

SUSHI
What would the Virgin Mary do?

NESTOR
Finish suckin' me off?

SUSHI
No!

She gets on her feet, re-applies lipstick.

NESTOR
Come on bitch, finish me up.

SUSHI
Sorry, I'm born again, Nestor.

INT. HOLY CROSS CHURCH - NIGHT

Sushi enters, blessing herself again with from the holy water font.

Sparse attendance for the evening devotional. She curtsies to the altar and selects a row.

Several pious women BLOCK her way. Hurt, Sushi backs off and settles a few pews over.

Father Pete enters. He smiles broadly. Sushi waves enthusiastically. He tacitly acknowledges her.

PARISHIONERS STARE.

Sushi takes a seat and counts prayers on her rosary. In the adjacent pew, LORCA NUÑEZ, (22), sobs. A gaunt face and piled hair.

Sushi moves closer.

SUSHI
Lorca? That you?

LORCA
Hey, Sushi.

SUSHI
I thought you were in rehab still.

LORCA
I am. Day Top. They give ya an hour off for lunch.

SUSHI
What are ya cryin' about?

The girl unloads.

LORCA
My sister. The good one, Isabella, got cancer. It's her ovaries. The doctors are taking more tests...she's only thirty-one. Thirty-one! Why did God do this to her?

SUSHI
(confident)
It's his plan.

Lorca glances over and scowls. *Conversation over.*

Sushi shrugs. She lowers her head and--

HER EYES POP--

She HOISTS Lorca from her arm pits.

SUSHI
Come on with me. My Virgin will help!

LORCA
Did ya go psycho or somethin'? We don't know no virgins.

SUSHI
 (looking up)
 She's watchin' right now and
 listenin' too.

Confused, Lorca looks at the vaulted ceiling for "She."

LORCA
 Who?

SUSHI
 The mother of us all.

LORCA
 I'm not goin' no wheres with you.

Sushi, halfway down the aisle, glances back.

SUSHI
 Want to save your sister or not?

Lorca hesitates.

SUSHI
 Don't you keep the Virgin Mary
 waiting. Let's roll!

Lorca follows her orders reluctantly. Stares carry them out the church.

EXT. HEAVEN'S GATE MOTEL - SAME TIME

Alicia, in a great mood, waves at cars as they pass. Her winning tickets burning a hole in her purse.

A Porsche slows down. She skips to over to the driver.

ALICIA
 Hey baby, want a date?

A FIST answers her question.

The blow CRACKS her nose. Her legs collapse, sprawling her over the sidewalk. Blood GURGLES from her left nostril.

RASHID, (28), in a Fila sweat suit and a chest covered with gold medallions, exits his car and stands over her.

Alicia in a fetal position, waits for the next blow.

RASHID
 Get the fuck off my street.
 Angel's not payin' your protection
 no more. If I see you again...

He PINCHES her nose. Alicia winces in pain.

RASHID

I give your face another hole.

He wipes the blood on her arm and drives off.

INT. OUR LADY DELI - HALF HOUR LATER

Alicia stumbles in. Red stained toilet paper WEDGED in her nostril.

She makes her way to the counter. Mrs. Genetti steps back. Alicia plunks her lottery tickets on the counter.

ALICIA

Cashin' in. Bag of ice and Tylenol.

Mrs. Genetti doesn't budge.

ALICIA

Please?

A voice.

LUIS (O.S.)

Do what the lady asks.

Mrs. Genetti slides the tickets off the counter and scans them into the lottery terminal. Mr. Genetti enters from the stock room.

LUIS

What happened?

ALICIA

Nothin'.

She staggers to the bathroom. The door is locked.

ALICIA

Door!

MRS. GENETTI

I don't want your blood all over.

Luis slaps the counter.

LUIS

She's a payin' customer!

Mr. Genetti snatches the key ring from his wife.

INT. ALICIA AND SUSHI'S APARTMENT - NIGHT

LIVING ROOM

Sushi leads an apprehensive Lorca into the living room.

Whispering--

SUSHI

She came to me, the Blessed
Mother.

Sushi tics her head towards the altar. Lorca leans over
studying the "holy relic."

LORCA

It's a fuckin' grilled cheese.

The girl heads for the door.

SUSHI

Wait! Look again.

Lorca acquiesces.

She peers closely at the sandwich. Her eyes widen. She GASPS.

INT. ALICIA AND SUSHI'S LOBBY - NIGHT

Alicia, with a melting bag of ice, navigates the stairs
poorly. Luis assists.

LUIS

Pain is weakness leaving the body.

Alicia shoots him a look.

They step on to the first landing. Yajira Perez POPS her head
out, enjoying Alicia's predicament.

ALICIA

Wanna keep your face, cow?

She slams the door.

LUIS

You make friends wherever you go.

Alicia pulls away and attempts the next landing on her own.

LUIS

You're welcome!

Softly.

ALICIA (O.S.)

Thanks.

Luis, satisfied, unlocks his door and limps inside.

INT. ALICIA AND SUSHI'S APARTMENT - CONTINUING

Alicia unlocks her door. Blinded by a too big bag of ice, she trips over a chair. Kicks it.

KITCHEN

She tosses a melting bag into the sink. Her face already swelled.

She presses her nose and winces. Murmuring from the living room. Alicia investigates.

LIVING ROOM

Sushi and Lorca, KNEEL at the altar, heads bowed.

SUSHI

Please Blessed Virgin. Help--

LORCA

Isabella. Take her cancer away--

SUSHI

And heal her body. Please hear our prayers.

Devotional, they rock in unison.

ALICIA EXPLODES.

ALICIA

WHAT'S--

SUSHI

I brought Lorca to pray.

ALICIA

Ya still on crack, Lorca?

LORCA

No! Only Meth. I swear!

ALICIA

Get her outta here. Now!

Frightened, the girl crosses herself profusely, grabs her purse, and HURRIES through apartment door.

SUSHI

That was so rude.
(re: the sandwich)
She sees everything.

ALICIA

What? Are you drinkin' the Holy
Kool-Aid now? Look at my friggin'
face.

SUSHI

Yeah. Oh, my God.

ALICIA

Angel sent a message. I'm off the
streets. If I try to hook again,
I'm dead.

SUSHI

Thank you, Virgin Mary! It's a
sign! You'll see!

Sushi tromps over to the grilled cheese sandwich.

A twitch of pain. Alicia presses her nose.

INT. ALICIA'S BEDROOM - MIDNIGHT

Alicia lies with a frozen bag of peas on her nose. She
glances over to her bubbling lava lamp.

She pulls a stuffed alien, won at a carnival, to her chest
and cries.

INT. SUSHI'S BEDROOM - SAME TIME

Under a poster of BRUCE LEE and RALPH LAUREN, Sushi cuddles
her grilled cheese Virgin and her pink, make-up stained,
fuzzy pillow.

INT. ALICIA AND SUSHI'S APARTMENT - MORNING

Sushi rushes around the apartment. Zombified, Alicia slouches
at the kitchen table.

SUSHI

Get your face on. We gotta go to
church.

ALICIA

Leave me alone.

SUSHI
I'm being confirmed and you're my
sponsor. Come on, you promised!

Alicia lays her head on the table.

SUSHI
GET UP OFF YOUR ASS NOW!

Off Alicia's pissed look--

EXT. HOLY CROSS CHURCH - MORNING

Father Pete greets his faithful flock. Parishioners by the
boat load on Confirmation Day.

The priest, needing a fix, braces the doorway for support.

FATHER PETE
(slurring)
Welcome. Please enter all.
Confirmation robes in the rectory.
Change there. God bless.

Nestor enters with his nephew.

FATHER PETE
Nestor! Always good to see you.
(hugging, he whispers)
I need thirty Vicodin. You have?

NESTOR
I got, Padre. \$100.

FATHER PETE
\$100? It was \$80 last time.

NESTOR
Yeah, but you need it more *this*
time.

FATHER PETE
God is watching.

NESTOR
For your sake, I hope not.

Alicia and Sushi round the corner. Sushi preoccupies herself
with lipstick.

Alicia catches Nestor and Father Pete's exchange.

FATHER PETE
You little...gim'me thirty tabs.

Nestor holds out his hand for the cash. The priest pats his vestment.

FATHER PETE

Priests don't have pockets!

NESTOR

Then priests don't get pills!

Nestor dips his finger in the holy water fount, crosses himself, and enters.

Agitated, Father Pete, rubs his temple.

SUSHI

Father Pete! I've been practicing my confirmation vows. I'm ready to be a maiden of the church.

Father Pete, stroking his eyebrow, nods wearily.

SUSHI

This is Alicia.

ALICIA

(smirking)

Bad headache, Father? Should get an aspirin for that.

The priest scowls.

INT. HOLY CROSS CHURCH - RECTORY - DAY

Father Pete resides over Confirmation; the completion of baptism.

An odd-dozen TEENAGE PUBESCENTS and Sushi, in red and white robes, stand in their pews waiting to receive the blessing from the priest.

Without a proper fix, Father Pete delivers his testimonial in fits. Slurring his speech.

FATHER PETE

Do you believe in the Holy Spirit, the Lord, the giver of life, who came upon the apostles at Pentecost and today is given to you sacramentally in Confirmation?

PUBESCENTS & SUSHI

I do.

In a nearby pew. Alicia rolls her eyes and picks at her nail polish.

FATHER PETE

Do you believe in the holy
Catholic Church, the communion of
saints, the forgiveness of sins,
the resurrection of the body, and
the life everlasting?

PUBESCENTS & SUSHI

I do.

AT THE FRONT DOOR

Lorca aids her sister, ISABELLA NUÑEZ, (31), through the vestibule. Still weak from her malady, Isabella leans on her sibling.

The pair spot Sushi and walk to the end of her pew.

LORCA

Psst! Psst! Sushi! Sushi!

Sushi and Alicia look down the crowded pew.

LORCA

Come to show ya the Virgin's work!
This is Isabella. My good sister.
She's cured now. Look, all her
cancer's gone! Gone! Thank you and
the Virgin.

ISABELLA

A miracle!

LORCA

Vaya con dios!

SUSHI

Virgin Power!

Father Pete is not amused. He turns up the volume.

FATHER PETE

This is our faith! This is the
faith of the Church. We are proud
to confess it in Christ Jesus our
Lord.

PUBESCENTS & SUSHI

Amen.

LORCA

I need to pray again at the sandwich. I'll pay anything ya want.

ALICIA'S EYES WIDEN.

ALICIA

Anything?

Lorca fans out a bill roll of twenties.

Alicia twists around and flags Nestor. Over several pews--

ALICIA

Nestor! Need thirty Vicodin. Ya got?

She PASSES a roll of twenties to the parishioner behind her.

ALICIA

Can you please pass this behind you? Thanks. God bless.

(to Sushi)

Gim'me the sandwich.

Sushi hesitates.

SUSHI

You can't take her out in here.

(looking up)

She'll get mad.

Alicia digs into her friend's purse and snatches it.

ALICIA

Where ya get these Virgin rules from?

Nestor exchanges the cash for a ZIPLOC BAG of tablets and passes it forward.

A LITTLE GIRL is left holding the bag.

ALICIA

Pass that up to me, sweetie. Thanks.

She gets her drugs in time for Father Pete to declare--

FATHER PETE

(to Alicia)

Quietly...come receive the Gift of the Holy Spirit.

AT THE ALTAR

The Confirmation candidates and their "SPONSORS" proceed to the altar to receive the blessing of communion.

DR. HERNANDEZ and his SON, with hand on his right shoulder, receive their blessing from Father Pete, who stumbles on the top step.

He extends his hands over the teenager and anoints the forehead in the form of a cross.

FATHER PETE

Be sealed with the Gift of the Holy Spirit.

Father Pete tries to plead his case one more time to the doctor but it falls on deaf ears.

The doctor HURRIES back to his pew.

Sushi and her sponsor, Alicia step to the altar.

FATHER PETE

Be sealed with the gift of the Holy--

Alicia pulls back. She turns to the crowded church--

ALICIA

Please everyone. I have a joyous announcement. The Virgin Mary is in my hand!

She holds aloft the grilled cheese virgin.

GASPS.

Father Pete steps forward.

FATHER PETE

What the hell are you--

Alicia presses the VICODIN BAG into his hand.

ALICIA

(whispering)

Let me talk here and ya got your stash for the week.

The priest swallows hard. *A deal with the devil.*

FATHER PETE

Please listen to our sister while
I pray for...love and kindness.

Reaching in the drug bag, he dashes off the altar.

Sushi moves in.

SUSHI

What are ya doin'?

ALICIA

Sharing our miracle. Give healing.
Ain't that what ya want too?

Sushi nods vigorously and steps back. Alicia takes "center stage."

ALICIA

The Virgin Mary's toasted face
appeared, only days ago, on my
lunch. My grilled cheese sandwich.

ALICIA

At first, I thought it was only
Borden cheese slices, Wonder
bread, I Can't Believe It's Not
Butter and a plop of Tabasco
sauce.

She hands off the sandwich to Sushi.

Like a game show prize, Sushi elegantly presents the grilled
cheese sandwich to the curious crowd.

ALICIA

Soon, I learned different! Very
different. Lorca and Isabella,
come up here.

Lorca pulls her frail sister to the altar.

ALICIA

This woman was full of cancer. On
her deathbed, dying. Till Lorca
prayed.

LORCA

I did. I prayed to the Virgin Mary
sandwich. And the next day, a
miracle...

(tears)

A miracle from heaven!

ISABELLA

I'm cured now. The cancer is gone.
I can feel it leave me. I'm going
to live. Live!

Mumbles of disbelief from the crowd.

ISABELLA

I've been coming to Holy Cross all
my life. I've taught a lot of your
kids in Sunday School. All of you
know me here as honest.

Heads bob. Alicia smiles.

ISABELLA

And as the Virgin Mary as my
witness--

LORCA

We are not lyin'!

ALICIA

She's cured!

Alicia walks to the side of the altar. She woefully gazes
into the Virgin Mary's eyes.

ALICIA

Our Holy Mother gave the miracle
of health back to this wretched
soul.

Sniffles amongst the parishioners.

ALICIA

Who here has prayed and prayed and
not had their prayers answered?

A smattering of hands raise -- then more.

Alicia snatches the sandwich from Sushi.

ALICIA

I can provide you a connection to
the Blessed Mother. If heaven is
the internet, this grilled cheese
is your modem.

(serene)

And ask yourselves, do ya want
dial-up or do you want a high-
speed connection for your prayers?
Sign on today!

SUSHI

Take the high-speed connection!

The pious woman stands.

PIOUS WOMAN

This is blaspheming the Church and
the Virgin Mary. Where is Father
Pete?

IN THE RECTORY

Father Pete RIFLES through the parishioner's belongings. He
finds a men's briefcase. He pulls it open and digs in.

CLOSE ON - DR. HERNANDEZ'S PRESCRIPTION PAD

The priest carefully PEELS OFF A SHEET and returns the
prescript.

ALICIA ON THE CHURCH ALTAR

ALICIA

You're right. The church doesn't
sanction these kinds of--

She fingers quotation marks.

ALICIA

"Miracles." But don't wait for
permission. Your loved ones will
suffer. Do you want that on your
conscience?

In a huff, the pious woman sits.

Alicia now zeros in on a MOTHER and her EYE-PATCHED LITTLE
BOY. She holds the sandwich just outside the reach of the
anguished mother.

ALICIA

You couldn't live with that kinda
mother guilt, could ya?

The mother shakes her head.

ALICIA

Then come and get this one time
offer at 455 west 168th street,
apartment #3T. Supplies are
limited. May the Blessed Mother
bless you all.

She reverently kisses the grilled cheese sandwich case.

SUSHI

Don't bring your wallets just your
faith!

Alicia WHACKS Sushi on the shoulder.

One by one the pews empty out. They follow Alicia out the
door like the Pied Piper.

Father Pete returns, renewed and refreshed.

FATHER PETE

Right. Where were we?

INT. ALICIA AND SUSHI'S APARTMENT - DAY

Alicia nods her head. Several faithful KNEEL AT THE ALTAR.

A cacophony of prayer--

HELP ME BLESSED MOTHER--

SAVE MY DAUGHTER BLESSED MOTHER--

GUIDE ME BLESSED MOTHER--

Sushi blesses the throng, sanctifying the proceedings, with
impromptu benedictions.

Alicia lifts the sandwich over her head. "Hail Mary's" abound.

ALICIA

Here's the grilled cheese virgin!
PAY TO PRAY! Who's first?

Alicia plucks the \$20 from WORSHIPPER ROSEANNE; middle aged
and stooped.

ALICIA

You're first. Go ahead. And tell
all your friends after ya leave.

Sushi NABS the money and presses it back into the palm of the
woman.

WORSHIPPER ROSEANNE

No! I must be cured. You can't
stop me! Nothing will stop me!

Worshipper Roseanne slaps the money back into Alicia's hand
and kneels at the grilled cheese. Sushi is flabbergasted.

ALICIA

Faith is a powerful thing.

Alicia plucks twenty dollar bills faster than an eight-year-old ripping through presents on Christmas morning.

THREE HOURS LATER

Alicia sits impatiently with an egg timer, clutching a fist full of money. A TRUE BELIEVER kneels at the sandwich.

Nearby, Sushi bestows her benediction on the faithful as they belt out "*Ave Maria*."

THE TIMER "DINGS."

ALICIA

Thank you for praying with the Virgin Mary. Come again.

She lifts the man to his feet, hustling him out the door. A crowd presses forward from the hallway, "*Virgin Mary heal me!*".

ALICIA

Visiting hours for the Virgin Mary are over. Come back tomorrow. GO AWAY!

Alicia chains the door. Sushi looks over to the altar.

SUSHI

She's so happy performing miracles. Look at her.

ALICIA

Look at these bills! Wahoo!

Counting out several bills.

ALICIA

Here's your share.

SUSHI

No. It doesn't feel like it's right.

ALICIA

It won't change anything, Sushi. Take it.

Sushi refuses.

SUSHI

Ya know Mary Magdalene?

ALICIA

What? The clothes designer?

SUSHI

No, she was a prostitute. Till Jesus saved her. And she and Mary were always together. Tight like us.

Sushi picks up the grilled cheese.

SUSHI

I had a dream that I'm the new Mary Magdalene. That's why the Blessed Mother came to me. To be her friend. Like her messenger, ya know. To tell people things --

ALICIA

Listen careful now, 'cause ya startin' to sound like one of those TV preachers talkin' all 'bout the Hallelujah! Okay so stop there! 'Cause here's the cold hard fact...ready?

(deliberate)

This is an old stale sandwich. Nothin' else, sweetie. Only a greasy, clog your arteries with shit grilled cheese.

Alicia reaches for the grilled cheese. Sushi CLUTCHES the relic and turns away.

SUSHI

She's real! I know it.

ALICIA

I'm doin' this all for us. This sandwich is our lottery ticket.

SUSHI

I have faith in her.

Waving the cash.

ALICIA

I have faith in these!

SUSHI

I know she's with us, Alicia.

ALICIA
How can you believe in the Virgin
Mary when ya never seen her?

SUSHI
I believe you have a brain and
I've never seen it!

ALICIA
You're gettin' too hormonal to
talk straight!

A knock at the door.

ALICIA
We're closed.

Another knock.

ALICIA
I said, we're fuckin' closed!

She opens the door.

LUIS
Where's the party?

Alicia looks to Sushi cradling the grilled cheese.

ALICIA
Let's get outta this freak show.

EXT. CONEY ISLAND BOARDWALK - ESTABLISHING

Home to a century of amusements and Nathan's; the world's
best hot dog.

EXT. CONEY ISLAND BOARDWALK - AFTERNOON

Luis and Alicia order two dogs. Luis reaches into his pocket.
Alicia stops him. Her treat. She pulls a WAD OF BILLS from
her purse and pays.

LUIS TAKES NOTE OF THE CASH.

CUT TO:

Walking and eating on the boardwalk.

ALICIA
I look at it like it's eBay.

LUIS
Like an auction?

ALICIA

I got somethin' to sell. And those religious crazies all want in.

LUIS

(proud)

They call that supplyin' the demand. I read that.

ALICIA

What I need to do is expand the business so they all could own a piece of my sandwich.

LUIS

You're like a Donald Trump with tits.

She glances at her date.

ALICIA

So sweet.

A game of chance on the boardwalk. A rotating carousel with plastic jewelry up for grabs.

Deposit a quarter. A sweeper springs out, pushing your prize into an exit chute. It's all junk but it's the chase that excites.

ALICIA

Oh, look. I love this. I'm gonna win that ring thing.

LUIS

Go for it.

She whips out a bill and asks for change. She deposits her quarter. The sweeper swings--nothing knocked off the carousel.

ALICIA

Crap!

LUIS

Try again. You gotta time it. Here gim'me your purse so you can concentrate.

She hesitates but hands it over. With both hands on the glass dome, she times her coin attack. Luis GLANCES inside the open purse.

She drops her quarter. The arm swings. The plastic ring, with a glued on crucifix, is pushed off and into the exit chute.

ALICIA
I won! I did it! I won!

LUIS
'Cause you're a winner.

Alicia demurely looks away.

EXT. WEST 163 STREET - EVENING

Sushi exits the GAP, smiling at the "HIRING" sign in the window.

She strolls over to a jewelry store. Featured prominently, a gaudy 18k gold VIRGIN MARY MEDALLION. It shimmers in the evening light.

Sushi presses her hand against the pane, mesmerized by its sheen.

She drags herself away from the trinket and crosses the street.

INT. CALIENTE BEIJING RESTAURANT - EVENING

Angel sits in the front table of a Cuban-Chinese takeout restaurant. He gnaws a chicken wing smothered with Egg Foo Young gravy.

EXT. CALIENTE BEIJING RESTAURANT - CONTINUING

Sushi halts, glares at Angel through the glass then turns away. She stops again, pivots and MARCHES into the joint.

INT. CALIENTE BEIJING RESTAURANT - CONTINUOUS

Angel takes a gulp of water. Sushi seats herself at his table.

ANGEL
Who the fuck are you?

SUSHI
I am Mary Magdalene of Manhattan.
Best friend of Mary of Bethlehem.

ANGEL
I don't know no Mary.

SUSHI
But you know my roommate, Alicia.

Angel raises his eyebrow.

ANGEL

Oh, you're the she-male.

(snide)

Not hard to figure.

SUSHI

Alicia's all finished up with you.

Wiping his hands on a paper napkin.

SUSHI

Yeah? You and what army?

SUSHI

My army in heaven!

ANGEL

Get the fuck out, before I slap
you to death!

Sushi DIPS THREE FINGERS into his water glass.

SUSHI

Strike terror, into this beast
Lord...

Like the Exorcist, she FLICKS "holy water" on his face.

SUSHI

The power of Christ compels you!

Angel is stunned. Another douse of Holy Water.

SUSHI

The power of the Virgin compels
you!

Angel pushes back his chair and raises his fist. Sushi
counters by THRUSTING the grilled cheese sandwich into his
face.

He halts. Goon Frankie rushes in. Gun at the ready.

A standoff. The two locked in Virgin-Mary-Holy-Water-Battle.

GOON FRANKIE

Ya want me to shoot it or
somethin'?

Spooked, Angel shakes his head.

Like a draw in a gunfight, Sushi slowly BACKS OUT the
restaurant.

Goon Frankie makes a move towards her. She hisses, BRANDISHING her relic. He backs off.

Sushi exits. Angel wipes his face dry. He raises the water glass to his lips. He freezes.

The man gingerly places it on the table and sits back down.

INT. ALICIA BEDROOM - NIGHT

Alicia leads Luis into her bedroom. She kicks off her pumps and sits on the bed.

ALICIA

I can't believe I'm nervous. What an asshole I am.

Luis stands over her. He strokes her hair.

LUIS

You're beautiful, Alicia.

ALICIA

Ya just wanna get laid.

She reaches for his crotch. Luis pulls away, grabbing her face with his hands.

LUIS

I don't want my girl talkin' like that. Ya hear me?

Kneeling, he kisses her thigh. Hands disappear under her skirt.

She lies back, not used to any sexual attention.

EXT. WEST 163TH STREET - NIGHT

Sushi draws a deep breath, takes out her Virgin Mary sandwich, smiles and kisses it.

Father Pete rushes past.

SUSHI

Father! I just--

The priest disappears into the pharmacy.

Nestor approaches.

NESTOR

Hey, Sushi. What up?

SUSHI

I just battled a demon from hell
and won!

NESTOR

Word. Listen, come up to my
apartment and let me fuck the shit
outta your ass. I got money
stacked.

SUSHI

That's real nice of you, Nestor.
But I'm Mary Magdalene now. Sorry.

NESTOR

No doubt. Well Mary, another
twenty says ya go raw.

SUSHI

No.

NESTOR

You tellin' me no? Who you think
you're talkin' to, homo?

She raises her boxed sandwich to his face.

SUSHI

The power of Christ I--

NESTOR

Gim'me that shit.

He grabs it.

SUSHI

No! Gim'me my Virgin back.

NESTOR

It's mines now.

INT. PHARMACY - NIGHT

The same COMMOTION through the front store glass. Oblivious,
a perspiring Father Pete fidgets on line.

CLOSE ON - HIS PRESCRIPTION

A FORGERY for thirty-five tablets of Vicodin on Dr.
Hernandez's prescript.

AT THE DRUG COUNTER

Father Pete presents his "prescription" to the pharmacist. He takes the slip of paper and examines it. A long pause. The priest fidgets.

FATHER PETE

Anything wrong?

PHARMACIST

This is a controlled substance. Any prescription for thirty or more tablets I need to call the prescribing physician--

FATHER PETE

Dr. Hernandez? Oh, he approved it.

PHARMACIST

I know Father, but that is our policy.

FATHER PETE

Jesus Christ. Gim'me it back.

PHARMACIST

You sure? I can have them all for you tomorrow.

FATHER PETE

Fine! God is watching you!

He storms out. The pharmacist re-examines the prescription and picks up the telephone.

EXT. WEST 163 STREET - CONTINUOUS

Sushi SWIPES at her sandwich as Nestor mockingly WAVES it above her head.

Father Pete exits the pharmacy.

Nestor steps into the street.

From nowhere, a bike messenger hits the bully. Nestor SPLAYS across a parked car's windshield.

The boxed sandwich FLIES IN THE AIR landing at Sushi's feet.

Nestor moans on the hood of the car as a crowd gathers. Cell phones pop open.

Stunned, Sushi picks up her relic. Looking to Father Pete then to her sandwich. She crosses herself several times.

FATHER PETE

Sushi, think we can go over to your apartment and tell Alicia about your Virgin miracle?

A TEENAGER looks at the bloodied Nestor.

TEENAGER

Yo, Padre. He's pretty bad. I think he needs, like, last rites or somethin'.

FATHER PETE

Yeah, hold on! Sushi, can we?

SUSHI

(cradling the relic)

Yes! Yes!

The priest kneels and makes a hurried sign of the cross over the moaning victim.

FATHER PETE

(super-fast)

May the Lord who frees you from sin...

(recognizing Nestor)

Oh...umm...also save you and raise you up. Come on, Sushi.

INT. ALICIA AND SUSHI'S APARTMENT - NIGHT

ALICIA'S BEDROOM

Alicia moans in ecstasy. Luis' head buried between her legs.

ALICIA

DON'T STOP, MY GOD! OH MY GOD!

DON'T STOP, I'M CUMMIN'!

The door bursts open. Sushi rushes to her orgasmic friend.

SUSHI

Alicia! I told you she was real! Nestor grabbed her and then the Virgin sent a bike messenger to smite him down like a locust then she flew back into my arms. She's not a sandwich. She's a miracle! A Blessed Mother miracle!

Kissing her friend, she sprints out the room, Father Pete appears.

FATHER PETE

Sorry to bother you two. But when
you get a minute Alicia, if we
could...

Off Luis and Alicia's shocked look--

INT. ALICIA AND SUSHI'S HALLWAY - NIGHT

Alicia dumps several Vicodin into Father Pete's palm. He
swallows them down dry.

FATHER PETE

Come again on Sunday. Big crowd to
pilfer. But don't tell Sushi.
She...looks up to me. And I don't--

ALICIA

I won't tell her nothin'. She's
the last person I wanna hurt.

FATHER PETE

What you're doing here is wrong.

ALICIA

I got the miracle, they got the
need. What's wrong with that?

FATHER PETE

Exploiting people's faith for
money? Plenty wrong with that.

Alicia glares at the man.

ALICIA

Look's like me and the church have
somethin' in common.

As Father Pete stumbles away, a long line winds down the
corridor for tomorrow's Virgin healing sessions.

The worshippers snack and pray sitting in their portable lawn
chairs.

Yajira pushes past the priest. Alicia SLAMS her door and
bolts it.

YAJIRA

Get these freaks outta my hallway!

INT. ALICIA AND SUSHI'S APARTMENT - MORNING

Sushi hums as she prepares breakfast. Alicia and Luis emerge,
puffy-eyed and exhausted.

SUSHI

Good morning, sleepies. Eggs?

They shake their heads.

SUSHI

I'm going for my first job
interview ever, the Gap. I'll get
to wear those important headphone
speakers on my ear like Britney.

ALICIA

But you don't got no retail
experience.

SUSHI

After blow jobs...I know clothes
best.

She kisses her sandwich then pockets it.

ALICIA

The sandwich stays here.

Sushi frowns. A knock at the door. She runs to open it--

ALICIA

Don't open that--

FAITHFUL HELEN, (35), and her cherubic DAUGHTER ANNE, (12),
push forward.

FAITHFUL HELEN

My daughter here. She's deaf. We
need the Virgin's help. And, we
can pay!

CLOSE ON - THE GIRL SIGNING "HELLO"

SUSHI

You don't have to--

ALICIA

Yes, you do. We open at eleven.
Come back then, tell your friends,
cash only.

She turns to Luis.

ALICIA

We need a bigger space.

INT. ALICIA AND SUSHI'S HALLWAY - MORNING

Prayers congest the stairwell to the roof. Yajira looks up the staircase in dismay.

EXT. ALICIA AND SUSHI'S ROOF - MORNING

A makeshift altar. The grilled cheese Virgin receives center billing.

Several pray. Others wait impatiently. Alicia vigilant with her egg timer.

FAITHFUL HELEN and her daughter kneel before the sandwich.

FAITHFUL HELEN

Please Mother Mary, let my
daughter hear again! I beg you,
hear my prayer.

The egg timer "bings." Mother and daughter step away.

ALICIA

Next!

Pushing forward FAITHFUL STELLA shares--

FAITHFUL STELLA

I had cataracts in my left eye
yesterday. But, I woke up and saw
clear again for the first time.
The sandwich cured me! Cured me!
It's a--

ALICIA

MIRACLE! Yes, all miracles twenty
bucks! Come and get healed!

Faithful Stella raises her hand to God. Other worshippers TOUCH HER SLEEVE and jubilate.

Luis PULLS HER through the rejoicing holies.

FAITHFUL STELLA

Gim'me my money. Fifty bucks you
promised.

Luis discreetly SLIPS THE MONEY INTO HER HAND.

LUIS

Now circulate, Stella. Talk up
your "miracle."

GRILLED CHEESE ALTAR

MRS. GENETTI, from the deli, sheepishly steps forward. A twenty dollar bill in her hand.

ALICIA
Well, lookie here.

The women stare at each other. But business is business. Smiling, Alicia takes the money. Mrs. Genetti genuflects next to another worshipper.

AT THE ROOF DOOR

A PIZZA DELIVERY KID looks around.

PIZZA DELIVERY KID
Large pepperoni and pineapple?

Alicia waves him over.

Another egg timer pops off. Alicia exchanges one paying customer for another. *Brisk business!*

REPORTER BECKY, (37), hands over her cash. Alicia grabs it. Starts the egg timer.

REPORTER BECKY
Alicia, my name is Becky Anson. I am a reporter for The Times. Can I ask you a few questions about you and your miracle sandwich?

ALICIA
I'm just an ordinary person in an extraordinary job.

A PHOTOGRAPHER snaps her photo.

REPORTER BECKY
Do you feel you are exploiting people's faith with your "miracle" sandwich?

ALICIA
Wanna talk exploitation? Everyday, on your front page, ya got another picture of a soldier blown up.

Luis shifts off his bad leg.

REPORTER BECKY
Why do you charge money to pray?

CLOSE ON - REPORTER BECKY'S GOLD CRUCIFIX

ALICIA
Your parents? Alive?

REPORTER BECKY
My...my mom.

ALICIA
Sick?

REPORTER BECKY
Very.

Alicia leans in and very carefully--

ALICIA
Wouldn't you do anything to make
her better? Anything?

CUT TO:

REPORTER BECKY, on her knees, praying before the sandwich.

REPORTER BECKY
Please Blessed Mother heal my
mother's cancer.

Alicia smiles.

INT. THE GAP - DAY

Sushi fusses with her hair, waiting for the interviewing
manager.

Trim, organized TEAM MEMBERS speak into their headphones
inquiring about sizes and stock. Several shoot the she-male
inquisitive glances.

Busy MANAGER MATT walks over with her application in hand.
Drilling commands into his headphone.

MANAGER MATT
Get Hillary off her break and on
register two. I want Mikah, Jonah,
and Ari on the floor. Matt out.

Without looking at Sushi, he thumbs through her application.

MANAGER MATT
You left sales experience blank.
Do you have any...

He glimpses Sushi for the first time. He stares. Nervous, She
blathers.

SUSHI

Well, no. But I love clothing. I always buy Vogue. So I know all the latest designers. Like Prada, Dolce and Gabbana, Donna Karen. She's so fashion.

Sly.

MANAGER MATT

Is that Prada you're wearing?

SUSHI

Oh no. This is from...from a shop in my neighborhood. A boutique.

Several employees and HILLARY, (22), snicker.

HILLARY

I love your makeup.

SUSHI

Thank you, I'm really good at make-overs, like on all the reality shows. I'd love to sell at your makeup counter...

Hillary nods her head.

SUSHI

And make people happy about themselves.

MANAGER MATT

(snide)

You should know. You have that natural feminine instinct.

Sushi's lip trembles. She smoothes her hair.

SUSHI

Well, I have to go now. Thank you for your...your...

Manager Matt stifles a smile. Hillary grins. Flattened, Sushi runs from the store.

EXT. GREENWICH STREET - AFTERNOON

She sobs over a fire hydrant.

EXT. ALICIA AND SUSHI'S ROOF - AFTERNOON

An auction with over eighty-odd people attending, crowd around Alicia. Luis shows a SPATULA.

ALICIA

Do I hear sixty-five?

(no bidders)

Remember, this spatula flipped the the Holy Mother as she was created. You can have your own personal Virgin relic to worship. All your friends jealous of your--

LUIS

Bridge to Heaven!

Alicia nods. *Good one!*

The bid increases to seventy, eighty-five. Sold at ninety-five!

Alicia collects the money. Hands over the goods.

LUIS

Next, the very frying pan that the Virgin Mary baked in! Still with the original grease!

WORSHIPPER MIGUEL

One hundred!

Alicia spreads her arms in exaltation to the Almighty above.

ROOF DOOR

Sushi steps through. Alicia spots her.

ALICIA

Sushi! How did it go?

A PRAYING MAN chides Alicia for disturbing him.

ALICIA

You're outta here. Luis!

Luis hustles the man off the roof.

ALICIA

(to Sushi)

Well?

Sushi pauses.

SUSHI
I got the job. I start tomorrow.

ALICIA
Congratulations! Everybody
listen! Sushi is the newest
official fashion employee of the
Gap. She got the job!

With all immersed in prayer, no response.

SUSHI
Stop! No big deal.

ALICIA
Bullshit. Let's celebrate. We'll
go to *Red Lobster* downtown. All
the shrimp you can peel. On me.

SUSHI
Oh, that's so sweet but I have to
get up early. Make sure I look...
perfect and everything.

Sushi side-glances at the edible Virgin then looks away
ashamed.

INT. ALICIA AND SUSHI'S APARTMENT - EVENING

Alicia counts the day's take. *OVER ONE THOUSAND BUCKS!*

LUIS
You're amazing, baby!

ALICIA
Keeps gettin' better, right?

Sushi turns to her bedroom. Alicia stops her.

ALICIA
Hey, you okay?

SUSHI
Just nerves. New job and all.

ALICIA
(whispering)
Proud of you.

Sushi smiles. She closes the door behind her.

LUIS
So what ya wanna do?

Alicia kisses him deeply. Pulls him into the bedroom. The money strewn on the table.

Luis glances back at the stack of greenbacks.

ALICIA'S BEDROOM

She straddles him.

ALICIA

I wanna show you somethin'.

LUIS

Take me to heaven, baby.

Anticipating, he pulls off his shoes. Alicia stops him.

She reaches under her mattress. She retrieves her tattered manila envelope.

She empties its contents over the unmade bed. Picks through the clippings till she finds her favorite. Hands it over to Luis.

He reads--

LUIS

Situated adjacent to the Arcadia National forest. Three acres. Wood cabin. Trout stream runs on property. Seventy-five thousand. Negotiable.

He looks at her.

ALICIA

That's what I'm savin' for.

LUIS

A cabin in Maine? Why?

ALICIA

Move out of this shit hole. Breathe real air. Somewhere I can grow old. I figure a few more months, I'll have the money I need and then some. We can buy it cash and have enough to set up, like a...mom and pop store. Sell bait and shit for all the trout fishing and stuff.

Luis shrugs.

ALICIA

You with me?

LUIS

You don't care that I'm all fucked
up? My leg?

(she shakes her head)

If I only had money. It would be
different. I need money.

ALICIA

You with me?

He squeezes her tight.

LUIS

Sure.

INT. HOLY CROSS CHURCH - MORNING

The church is empty. Sushi enters. She blesses herself at the
holy water font. Takes a pew.

A tousled Father Pete enters fully robed, rubbing his
grizzled cheek. He loafs past the altar, stumbles, and
crosses himself.

He looks to his flock but the pews are empty except for Sushi.

FATHER PETE

Looks like a vacation day for
God.

SUSHI

Yeah.

FATHER PETE

Haven't seen you at confession.
Everything okay?

SUSHI

Does God love everybody?

FATHER PETE

From the smallest lady bug to the
mightiest sperm whale. Sorry,
didn't mean to make--

SUSHI

Even me?

FATHER PETE

Especially you. He takes special
care of the most vulnerable.

SUSHI

Like Mary Magdalene?

FATHER PETE

He took her from sin and saved her.

SUSHI

She was best friends with Mary,
too?

FATHER PETE

That's a good way to put it. Yes.
Best friends.

SUSHI

What did those girls do for
spending money? 'Cause if they
lived in New York now, they
couldn't even afford those
swaddling clothes or even a manger
on the Lower East Side.

FATHER PETE

Have you given up--

SUSHI

Cold turkey. No more trickin'. Not
even a hand job!

FATHER PETE

Incredible! Thank God. What made
you do it?

SUSHI

My Blessed Virgin grilled cheese.

FATHER PETE

The Blessed Mother is in heaven
not baked on a sandwich.

SUSHI

You're wrong! She's transgressed
from Heaven above and landed right
on my sandwich.

Father Pete retrieves a BOTTLE OF PILLS from under his robe.
He pops a Vicodin.

SUSHI

You okay?

FATHER PETE

Headache.

SUSHI

Sorry. My first job
interview...well, it didn't go
real good and all.

FATHER PETE

Work here. Yes. Yes, I need a part-
time secretary. Answering phones.
Filing. Typing.

SUSHI

I can do typing stuff!

FATHER PETE

You're hired!

Sushi kisses all over his face.

SUSHI

Thank you, Father. Thank you.

The pious woman enters. Flabbergasted, she about faces and
huffs out of the door.

Off the priest's worried look--

EXT. ALICIA AND SUSHI'S ROOF - AFTERNOON

Log jammed roof with eager worshippers. Several on their
knees.

Like a well oiled faith machine, Alicia deftly manages the
egg timer.

Luis sells from a makeshift card table. Piles of T-shirts,
key chains, photos, and ephemera fill the table top.

LUIS

T-shirts rubbed on the virgin
sandwich: \$15. Virgin sandwich key
chains: \$10. Salvation: Priceless.
No personal checks!

Yajira pushes her way through the crowd.

YAJIRA

I want all these people outta here
now!

ALICIA

My rent's all paid up, Yajira.
(to her prayer)
Time. Miracle granted. Go.

Yajira CHARGES the grilled cheese sandwich altar. Like good Christian soldiers, several of the fanatical RESTRAIN her.

They YANK the crazed woman into the dark stairwell.

ALICIA

You can't fight heaven! Next!

INT. HOLY CROSS CHURCH - RECTORY - AFTERNOON

Sushi sits at her desk, an employed member of society.

She sharpens her pencils, arranging them in a row. Practicing smiling and greeting.

The phone rings. Buttons flash on the call panel. Startled, she picks up the receiver.

SUSHI

Hello? Hello?

It continues to ring. She pushes the flashing red button.

SUSHI

Hello...Holy Cross church, Mary Magdalene discoursing with you. May I assist...okay...yes...can you spell that?

(she scribbles)

Great, umm, what do you want me to do it now? Okay, I will.

She puts down the phone. Rising, she heads for the door, stops, and returns to the phone.

SUSHI

Don't hang up.

She knocks on an imposing mahogany door. It reads: FATHER PETER CICERONE.

SUSHI

Father Pete, it's Doctor Hernandez. He really needs to talk to you about some prescription you tried to fill on your own. He says there is a big problem with it.

FATHER PETE (O.S.)

Tell him, I'm not here.

SUSHI

But, that's lying.

FATHER PETE (O.S.)
Tell him, I'll call him back.

Sushi approves. She conveys the message.

SUSHI
The father is occupied at the
present juncture. It would be most
fallacious if you called at an
identical time in the coming
future. Good bye.

INT. FATHER PETE'S OFFICE - AFTERNOON

A messy room littered with drawings from Holy Cross
Kindergartners. A crucifix, and a fax machine.

Disheveled, Father Pete stares at his Empty bottle of
vicodin. he sucks his teeth.

INT. HOLY CROSS CHURCH - RECTORY - CONTINUING

BISHOP REINKE, (73), enters. An imposing officer of the
church. He speaks with lilting Bavarian accent.

He stares at Sushi.

BISHOP REINKE
Who are you?

Sushi rises and curtsies deeply.

SUSHI
I am Sushi, the new secretary,
Your Greatness.

He snarls.

BISHOP REINKE
Is the priest in?

SUSHI
Yes, but--

Without hesitation, he knocks on the door.

FATHER PETE (O.S.)
Sushi, I'm busy.

The Bishop BARGES IN.

INT. FATHER PETE'S OFFICE - AFTERNOON

The Bishop enters. Father Pete hops to his feet, tucking his shirt tails.

FATHER PETE

Bishop Reinke, what an unexpected surprise.

The Bishop offers his hand to be kissed. Father Pete complies.

He searches for a place to sit. The priest clears a chair.

BISHOP REINKE

How do you find anything in this disarray?

FATHER PETE

Oh, I know where everything is. A divine filing system.

He chuckles. The Bishop does not.

BISHOP REINKE

What's this about a prostitute preaching at Mass?

FATHER PETE

I thought the parishioners should hear about a miracle--

BISHOP REINKE

Stop it now! A grilled cheese virgin sandwich? It mocks the Holy Mother and our church. Understand?

FATHER PETE

Of course. Yes. Immediately.

BISHOP REINKE

The archdiocese is concerned about Holy Cross.

FATHER PETE

Oh?

BISHOP REINKE

Your attendance at services and in the school are suffering. We have paid millions this year to frivolous lawsuits. This congregation must pull its weight. Or there will be consequences. Understand?

FATHER PETE

Yes, Your Excellency. I...need
your spiritual guidance on a
matter.

The Bishop glances at his watch and nods.

FATHER PETE

I have developed a...condition.
You see, I depend on medicine too
much. Pills. I'm afraid I may be--

BISHOP REINKE

Your troubles are answered in
prayer. That is my advice.

FATHER PETE

I'm sick!

BISHOP REINKE

Then get well!

FATHER PETE

I hear myself saying Mass and I
don't believe it anymore! My soul
is sick. I don't feel like I'm
part of this church. The canon.

BISHOP REINKE

Then think less of pills and more
of God. Good day.

He holds his RINGED HAND aloft to be kissed. Father Pete
doesn't move. Insulted, the Bishop strides through the door.

The priest rubs his head. Collapsing into his chair.

INT. ALICIA AND SUSHI'S APARTMENT - EVENING

Alicia paces. She WAIVES a ticket from the fire department.

ALICIA

Fucking fire marshals! Emergency
exits on the roof? Bullshit. When
I see that fat cow, Yajira, I'm--

LUIS

Forget her. Forget the roof. We
got enough money. Let's get out of
this. Make our cut for Maine.

Alicia glares at him.

ALICIA

What are ya gettin' out of this Luis?

LUIS

What ya mean?

ALICIA

What's your take? What are you hoping to sponge off me? A free ride?

LUIS

Have I ever asked for anything? If you are too fucked up to see that I am in this for us, then fuck it. I'm outta here.

He pushes the chair out from under him. She pulls him down with a kiss.

ALICIA

Come on, I'm just wired. Please? I'm sorry.

Satiated, he nods.

ALICIA

I know how can we reach millions of people.

Luis leans forward.

ALICIA

Internet. We set up a site. Grilled_Cheese_Virgin.com. We do a live video of the sandwich. An altar and shit. We'll take Visa, Amex all that shit. Then a click of the mouse. Type in your prayer. Instant gold mine.

LUIS

I know somethin' about computers. I got training in the military.

He starts scribbling on a slip of paper.

ALICIA

Do you want a kid?

LUIS

What? You came out pregnant?

ALICIA

Me? No, can't ever. Fucked up
abortion. But like adopt one from
one of those African countries
somewhere?

LUIS

I'd like that with you, with us.

They kiss. A key in the door. Sushi enters.

ALICIA

Hey, where ya been, girl?

Sushi smiles and pushes the door open further. Father Pete is
revealed.

Alicia and Luis conceal the cash.

ALICIA

Oh, Father. Come in. Sit down.

LUIS

Uh, want a beer?

The priest, sweating, sits.

FATHER PETE

Where is it?

Sushi walks to the altar and retrieves the Virgin.

She places it front of Father Pete.

He picks it up and examines. He opens the case.

Alicia and Luis tense. He lifts it out and scrutinizes the
Virgin intently.

FATHER PETE

Well, I'll give you this much. It
looks like her. Good job.

SUSHI

She came from heaven.

FATHER PETE

She came from a frying pan.
(to Alicia)
This has to stop.

LUIS

Says who?

FATHER PETE

God. Jesus. The Virgin Mary.

ALICIA

Callin' in the heavy hitters?

SUSHI

It's wrong.

Luis takes the sandwich.

ALICIA

Tell the truth, Padre. It's wrong
for the church. Cuts into your
bottom line.

The priest shakes from withdrawal.

FATHER PETE

Your conscience is represented in
deeds. The church its Earthly
manifestation.

ALICIA

So this is about my conscience or
yours?

The priest LUNGES for the sandwich. He lifts it to his mouth
to bite it.

Alicia and Luis JUMP the big man. They GRAB his hands as the
sandwich inches closer to his choppers.

Alicia BITES his ear. He screams, slapping Alicia.

Sushi SCREECHES. Louis moves in, fists raised. Alicia stops
him.

ALICIA

Sushi, your hero here--

FATHER PETE

Stop!

ALICIA

Is a drug addict. Sold his soul
for a fix.

The priest sobs. He glances to a shocked Sushi then lumbers
through the door.

ALICIA

A fuckin' drug addict with an
upside down collar!

Sushi stares at her friend with contempt.

ALICIA
What did I do?

SUSHI
You're mean, a liar and blasphemer!

Sushi retreats to her bedroom.

ALICIA
I want you out tomorrow!

SUSHI (O.S.)
Done! Heathen!

Alicia plops on the couch, staring at nothing.

SERIES OF SHOTS --

--Father Pete tremors during communion. He avoids Dr. Hernandez once again, deferring his communion to a eucharistic minister.

--Sushi looks at a vacant apartment. It's a dump. the super pinches her ass. She curls her lip and leaves.

--Alicia passes out Grilled_Cheese_Virgin.com refrigerator magnets to the faithful at holy cross church. Holding a ziploc vicodin bag, Father Pete scowls from the last pew.

INT. LUIS' APARTMENT - AFTERNOON

Camera! Lights! Action!

The grilled cheese sandwich stands alone under a klieg light. Luis and Alicia stare at a TV monitor.

ALICIA
Nobody is signing on!

LUIS
They will.

ALICIA
When?

LUIS
They will!

She sticks out her tongue. A beep. A customer!

LUIS
We got a live one.

He clicks his mouse.

LUIS
Her credit card authorized. Fifty
bucks.

ALICIA
What do we do?

LUIS
She types in her prayer, and I
film you saying it. It's
interactive.

ALICIA
Inter-what?

He tosses her a nun's wimple.

ALICIA
I'm not wearing this shit on
camera.

LUIS
You're dressed like a hooker.

ALICIA
Duh.

She gives in and pulls on the getup. HALF NUN. HALF WHORE.

LUIS
Now kneel in front of the sandwich.

Slowly, trying not to trip over her stilettos.

ALICIA
You're bossy today.

LUIS
Okay, good. I'm turning on the
mic. The prayer is: "Please
blessed Mother let me pass my math
test tomorrow."

Like a director--

LUIS
And action!

Alicia freezes. Luis encourages her behind camera. She
dramatically clasps her hands in prayer and recites--

POV - TV MONITOR

Alicia "praying" with the Virgin Mary in the foreground.

ALICIA

Please, Blessed Mother let me pass
my math test tomorrow.

LUIS

(whispering)

Great, "cha-ching", fifty bucks.
Wait another one. Stay there.

(he reads)

"Please Holy Mother let me lose
ten more pounds before my wedding
next week."

(direction)

And action.

Alicia giggles.

ALICIA

Please Holy Mother, let me lose
ten pounds before my wedding next
week and don't let my groom see my
naked ass until after the ceremony.

Luis scolds her. She shrugs, adjusting her cowl.

Another prayer clicks on. Luis reads it.

LUIS

"Virgin Mary, please let me get
pregnant and bless me with the
baby I've wanted so long." And
action, Alicia.

She draws a deep breath. Looks away.

Luis, irate, gestures to hurry it up. She looks into the
Virgin's crusty eyes. Slowly--

ALICIA

Virgin Mary, please let me get
...pregnant and bless me...bless
me with a baby...

From behind the camera Luis prompts.

LUIS

"With the baby I've wanted so
long."

ALICIA
(tearing)
With the baby I've wanted...so
very long.

She pulls off her wimple and runs from the apartment.

LUIS
Wait! We got more incoming! Fuck!

INT. HOLY CROSS CHURCH - AFTERNOON

Drugged up, Father Pete stammers through his homily.

FATHER PETE
And remember it's not God that
makes us do what we do. Free will
guides us through all we--

DETECTIVES CARTER & KAUFMAN flash their badges to a CHURCH
GREETER. She points them to Father Pete.

They look to him and walk down the aisle.

Father Pete backs off the lectern.

FATHER PETE
(fast)
Go in peace with the Lord.

HE SPRINTS through the chancel and out of sight.

The two detectives quicken their pace, pursuing the priest.
The congregation is startled. Some stand. Others dial cell
phones.

Sushi follows.

INT. HOLY CROSS CHURCH - RECTORY - CONTINUING

The two cops POUND Father's Pete's door.

DETECTIVE CARTER
Father, open the door.

DETECTIVE KAUFMAN
We need to talk about a
prescription you filled. Father?

Sushi enters the office.

Through the keyhole, detective Kaufman spies the chubby
priest SQUEEZING through a window.

He nods to Carter. Using his shoulder as a battering ram, he breaks open the door.

They grab the SQUEALING PRIEST by the hips and pull him back.

FATHER PETE

I didn't do anything. Please! It was only a few pills. Leave me alone! I need my pills!

DETECTIVE CARTER

You're only making this worse.

Behaving like a toddler, he turns to "Jell-O" in their arms.

Cuffs are SLAPPED on his wrists. Sushi hyperventilates.

DETECTIVE KAUFMAN

You have the right to remain silent. Anything you say can be used against you in a court of law--

FATHER PETE

I'm a priest. You can't do this!

They drag him out through the office.

INT. HOLY CROSS CHURCH - CONTINUOUS

They haul him, in disgrace, past his congregation. Father Pete BLUBBERS, mucus dripping from his nostril.

Sushi emerges visibly shaken.

INT. POLICE STATION - EVENING

Noisy. Confusing. Dirty.

A command desk manned by the DESK SERGEANT. A COP hustles a perp past.

Sushi sits in the waiting area, praying on her rosaries.

Father Pete emerges from custody, red eye and pale. Sushi rushes to him.

FATHER PETE

I need to get back to the church.

She supports his elbow.

SUSHI

Let me help you. Everything will be okay, Father. We all make mistakes.

The priest smiles for the first time.

SUSHI

And call the Bishop when you get back. Right away.

FATHER PETE

Bishop Reinke?

SUSHI

I called him. I didn't know where else to get the bail money from. He was real nice this time. Not scary at all.

The priest's face flushes red.

FATHER PETE

You called the Bishop? The Bishop!
(raging)
You think you're better than me?
You're...you're not even human.

SUSHI

No, please don't--

FATHER PETE

Look at you! Not a woman. Not a man. You should have died at birth and saved us all the shame.

Sushi gasps for air.

FATHER PETE

(whispering)
You're God's only mistake.

He stalks off. Sushi trembles in the middle of the bustling station.

EXT. WEST 168 STREET - NIGHT

Drizzle. Humid. Steamy.

Sushi stumbles aimlessly past vacant lots and blaring bachata music. Eyes puffed from crying, she doubles over in pain.

She sees Lorca propped up against a fire hydrant.

SUSHI

Lorca! You okay?

Drugged up, drooling and barely coherent.

LORCA

My sister. My sister...she's dead.

SUSHI

No, the Virgin saved her. I seen her in church.

LORCA

You lied. You told us she...

Her heads bobs. Sushi pulls her arm.

SUSHI

Let me get ya somethin' to--

LORCA

Get away from me. Fuckin' liar!
Fuckin'...

Her eyes roll back; she passes out on the curb.

Tears streak Sushi's face. A Dodge Durango heads towards her. The passenger window rolls down.

CUT TO:

Sushi gets banged in the back seat. They finish. She opens the door, tumbles into the rain.

The car SPLASHES her as it tears out.

Sobbing, she lumbers in the down pour. Her mascara runny, she looks like a feral cat.

In the driving rain, Sushi sees a JEWELRY STORE across the street.

Again, in the display, an 18k gold medallion of the VIRGIN MARY GLISTENS.

Street lights reflect off the precious metal.

Sushi swallows hard.

The golden Virgin RADIATES. Transfixed, Sushi nods.

SUSHI

Yes, I hear you! I'm not afraid.

Sushi quickens her pace, crossing the street. The Virgin nearly within reach.

Arms wide open, Sushi PROCLAIMS--

SUSHI
I'm coming, Mother Mary! Wait
for --

An oncoming SUV JAMS its brakes. Too late.

STRUCK by a Cadillac Escalade, her writhe body JETTISONS onto a parked car windshield.

The impact SPLINTERS the glass. Sushi rolls onto the sidewalk.

INT. ALICIA AND SUSHI'S APARTMENT - 4 AM

ALICIA'S BEDROOM

She sifts through an old photo album.

A "CONGRATULATIONS" GREETING CARD--

She opens it and reads. Nodding her head, she replaces the memento.

AN EXPIRED WRAPPED CONDOM--

She laughs.

A WEDDING PHOTO--

A youthful alicia in a billowing WEDDING DRESS, her groom in police dress uniform.

The phone rings.

INT. HOLY CROSS CHURCH - RECTORY - DAWN

Father Pete jiggles his key in his office door. The lock changed.

He smiles then titters. Collapsing on the linoleum, he convulses with laughter.

INT. COLUMBIA PRESBYTERIAN HOSPITAL - MORNING

Alicia rushes down a crowded corridor. A NURSE at her station.

ALICIA
My friend is here. I need to see
her.

NURSE

Name?

ALICIA

Her name is Sushi.

Checking the admissions list.

NURSE

I don't have Sushi.

ALICIA

I don't know his real name. She's a man.

The nurse shakes her head.

ALICIA

A transsexual. Pre-op.

NURSE

(giggling)

Oh, the she-male. You family?

ALICIA

Yes. Yes, I am.

NURSE

Room 6507-B.

OUTSIDE 6507-B

Alicia peeks through the door window. Covers her mouth. She bends over, breathing deeply. A wave of nausea.

INSIDE 6507-B

Composed, Alicia walks to her friend's bedside. A thicket of machines keep Sushi alive.

An intravenous needle FLOATS CHEMICALS into her blood.

Sushi's face sutured. One eye swelled shut.

CLICKS AND BEEPS indicate her heart still beats.

Alicia gently pulls hairs from her moist forehead. Sushi smiles.

SUSHI

I was crossing...crossing the street. The Virgin...she said to me...

ALICIA

What, you stupid queen?

SUSHI

She...she said, "Don't be afraid."

ALICIA

Yeah! Right! That's right. You shouldn't be afraid 'cause the doctors are gonna make you all better. Then, we'll--

SUSHI

No...she meant...don't you be afraid.

ALICIA

Me?

Sushi nods.

SUSHI

Then...the Blessed Mother said, ..."Welcome Felix."

ALICIA

Who's Felix, sweetie?

SUSHI

Me.

ALICIA

My middle name is Mary. I didn't tell you because I didn't want you to go all crazy religious on me.

Reaching into her purse, Alicia retrieves the grilled cheese Virgin.

ALICIA

I brought her for you. No charge. See, she's gonna make a miracle for real happen and keep you with me like always.

She places the case along side Sushi's face. Sushi touches her head to the case and relaxes.

ALICIA

(sobbing)

'Cause you stupid queen, you're my only...my best friend. And I can't ever be without you...please Sushi. Please...

The heart monitor's STEADY BEEP morphs into a SOLID HUM.

A red light flashes. NURSES charge the room.

Alicia stuffs the sandwich case into her purse and backs out.

EXT. ALICIA'S ROOF - DAWN

Alicia steps onto her roof. Clouds obscure the sun's first ray.

Several candles situated in a semicircle. Remnants from the grilled cheese altar.

She kneels and examines one of the religious candles. It is the Blessed Mother.

Her eyes narrow and she SMASHES it.

She grabs another candela and HURLS it against the roof door. It shatters too.

She dumps the contents of her purse and retrieves the sandwich in its plastic case.

In vain, she tries to pry the case open. No can do. The woman SLAMS IT on the ground. Still it doesn't open.

ALICIA

FUCK!

Alicia TOSSES it across the roof. She collapses and sobs.

Heaving, she lies on her back.

A light breeze brushes her cheek. Her breathing steadies. Content, she closes her eyes.

ALICIA'S DREAM - A CAVALCADE OF IMAGES

-- REVERSING -- FORWARDING -- PAUSING -- JUMPING --

--FLOWER BLOOMING

--REVELERS CELEBRATING

--SUN RISING

--CHRYSALIS BURSTING

--SUSHI TWIRLING

--LIGHT BLINDING

POV - FROM HIGH ABOVE

A ray of light DRIFTS over Alicia's face. She closes her eyes tighter.

Gasping, she BOLTS upright, clutching her stomach.

She darts her eyes left then right, convinced someone watches.

Frightened, she HURRIES to the roof door. Looking down, the grilled cheese sandwich INTACT at her feet.

She sucks in a deep breath and stuffs it in her purse.

Left behind, the candles twinkle.

INT. ALICIA AND SUSHI'S APARTMENT - DAWN

Alicia opens her door. She tiptoes toward her bedroom.

She halts. Moves to Sushi's bedroom. Opens the door.

She surveys her friend's cluttered room. After a long pause, she closes the door and heads to her own bedroom.

ALICIA'S BEDROOM

Luis sleeps on her bed. She pulls off her heels. Climbs into bed. She snuggles into the crook of his arm.

Luis awakens.

LUIS

Sushi?

ALICIA

Hold me.

Luis rolls his eyes and complies.

LUIS

I got an interesting phone call.

ALICIA

Tighter.

Peeved, he obliges. Alicia falls into a deep slumber.

FOUR HOURS LATER

Alicia sleeps. Luis tugs at the zipper of Alicia's purse. It jams.

ALICIA (O.S.)

Hi.

Luis spins around, greeting Alicia with a tight smile.

He sits on the edge of the bed and rubs her neck.

LUIS

You okay, babe?

ALICIA

It can always get worse.

He shifts nervously.

LUIS

You got a call. A place called Golden Casino. They want to buy the sandwich. They read about in the paper.

ALICIA

(rising)

No.

LUIS

They said they'd make you a real serious offer. They want to put it on display for everyone.

Alicia shakes her head.

ALICIA

It's not for sale.

Reaching under her mattress, he pulls the worn manila envelope, and empties the real estate clippings over her lap.

He shuffles through the pile, selecting the Maine cabin she's been ogling.

LUIS

You can treat Sushi to a good funeral. Like she deserves. Then, we can start out fresh. Get our cabin, open that fish shop--

ALICIA

You'd come with me to Maine? Together?

LUIS

You'd be a great mommy, too.

ALICIA

Yeah?

He nods his head.

Alicia looks at her Maine cabin dream. *The Decision*.

ALICIA

Gim'me their number.

EXT. MADISON AVENUE SKYSCRAPER - ESTABLISHING

Glass and steel. Suit and tie.

INT. GOLDEN CASINO OFFICES - DAY

Alicia stirs at the end of a long table. Several suits smile politely. No individuals, all corporate clones.

The encased grilled cheese sandwich sits dead center of the table lording over the proceedings.

They make their sales pitch.

SUIT DONALDSON

We would treat the object with respect.

SUIT CHANG

For the public to enjoy.

ALICIA

You're a fuckin' casino.

SUIT KINSELLA

Yes, but we are more. Attractions. Events.

SUIT DONALDSON

Your grilled cheese would be an event. To be admired in a specifically designed environment.

Alicia considers.

ALICIA

How much?

They open a pad, scribble a number, and pass it to her.

She reads it, smirks, grabs a pen, crosses out their offer.

She scribbles "\$60,000" in block letters. Holds it up for all to see.

SUIT CHANG

We appreciate that it has
sentimental value to you but that
amount is not--

She rips off the page. Scribbles and presents.

"A CASHIER CHECK MADE OUT TO CASH!"

SUIT KINSELLA

Perhaps you're not familiar with
negotiating--

As he talks, she scribbles--

SUIT KINSELLA

We make an offer first. You can
then counter--

CLOSE ON - THE PAD

"YES OR I EAT THE GRILLED CHEESE!"

The suit clones look to each other for a decision.

EXT. ALICIA AND SUSHI'S APARTMENT - AFTERNOON

Alicia jumps out of a taxi and bee-lines for her building.
Several fervent WORSHIPPERS greet her with cash.

WORSHIPPER MIGUEL

I need to speak to the Virgin now.
My wife...please, can you--

WORSHIPPER ROSEANNE

I feel my cancer leaving. I do.
But I need to talk to her one more
time.

ALICIA

Sorry. I sold the grilled cheese
virgin. I don't have it anymore.

WORSHIPPER MIGUEL

NO! NO!

ALICIA

But...but listen. Ya can still
pray to the Virgin...anytime. You
don't need my sandwich. Ya never
did.

Worshipper Roseanne SLAPS her across the face. Alicia
stumbles.

WORSHIPPER ROSEANNE

That sandwich was the only thing
that kept me alive. You just
killed me!

INT. ALICIA AND SUSHI'S LOBBY - AFTERNOON

Alicia rushes past the lobby. Yajira moves aside as Alicia
bounds up the stairs.

ALICIA

I'm outta this shit hole and all
of you sickos!

YAJIRA

Thank God, I'll never have to see
your whoa face anymore.

From above.

ALICIA

Don't thank God for that. And
Yajira, guess where all your son's
allowance went?

She smirks. It takes Yajira a minute to piece it together
then--

YAJIRA

PUTA!

ALICIA (O.S.)

COW!

INT. ALICIA AND SUSHI'S APARTMENT - AFTERNOON

Luis paces, awaiting the news. Alicia enters subdued.

LUIS

What happened? Did they go for it?
No, they said no. Shit! I knew I
should of went with--

Alicia holds up a certified check for \$60,000.

ALICIA

Made out to "cash." No taxes! Free
and clear, Luis.

Luis grabs it. His fingers caress the numbers.

ALICIA

Come on baby, I have something
else to show you.

ALICIA'S BEDROOM

She vaults into her bedroom, pulling Luis behind.

She PRIES OFF the back of the TV set. Withdraws the stashed cosmetic case, placing it into Luis's hands.

ALICIA

Go ahead.

He unzips. It's jammed with dirty bills.

ALICIA

Another six thousand. A new start.

Luis shakes his head, taking deep breaths. Alicia moves in.

ALICIA

I feel like I'm comin' up from
under water. Like a baby takin'
its first breath outta its mother.
I feel it. Sushi was right.
Something has my name on it and
I'm finding out what it is. I'm
real afraid, but I'm gonna brave
it out. 'Cause ya give me courage,
Luis. Not just to go to Maine but
to wherever this all takes us.

She touches her forehead to his.

ALICIA

I love you, Luis.

He nods. She kisses him over and over.

Alicia grabs a duffle bag and stuffs clothes, Tabasco sauce, makeup, toilet paper--

ALICIA

We are so fuckin' outta here.

LUIS (O.S.)

You're the best, Alicia.

Without looking--

ALICIA

Aww.

LUIS (O.S.)

I was so bitter when my leg got
fucked up over there. I prayed to
God to help, ya know?

ALICIA

Did he?

LUIS (O.S.)

Yeah, he sent you. I saw you and I thought, oh, she's my angel. My baby. I love bein' with you, right. Touchin' you. Bein' inside you.

(pause)

Then the sandwich came up. I never had money like that. Easy money. I can write my own ticket now. I never want to go back, baby. I got a good taste. I like me more with money. That's what it is.

(rubbing his leg)

Makes me forget. Then with all this fuckin' temptation...it's like the Lord is testin' me and testin' me.

Alicia pauses over her suitcase. Dreading--

ALICIA

Ya pass the test, baby?

LUIS

No.

From behind, Luis--

THAWKS ALICIA IN THE HEAD--

with her lava lamp.

She collapses on the bed, falling to the floor unconscious.

Blood TRICKLES past her forehead.

DISSOLVE TO:

INT. ALICIA'S BEDROOM - HALF HOUR LATER

Alicia twitches. Opens her eyes. The room blurred.

Lifts her head. Splitting pain.

Alicia hoists herself onto the bed. She lies back and stares at the ceiling.

After a LONG MOMENT--

Alicia cracks up then laughs harder and harder hugging her stomach.

EXT. WEST 187 STREET - EVENING

In a daze, Alicia walks across a busy street. Cars honk, swerving to avoid her.

Looking up, she stands at the--

EXT. SLIDERS STRIP CLUB - ESTABLISHING

Sleazy joint with a pee-stained facade. Several letters are missing from the sign. It reads: SLID RS RIP LUB.

INT. SLIDERS STRIP CLUB - EVENING

Alicia shuffles through the entrance. Angel stands across the bar.

He grins, extending his arms. Making her decision, she walks into his embrace. He presses her tight to his chest.

ANGEL

Ask me.

ALICIA

Angel, I got nothin'. Can I...can I come back?

ANGEL

(whispering)

Beg me nice.

ALICIA

Please...please baby, take me back?

He nips her ear. She shudders.

EXT. WEST 189 STREET - NIGHT

Dressed in an "Jesus Saves" T-shirt and jeans, Father Pete trolls the streets for Vicodin.

He approaches any shadowy figure propped in a doorway. Some turn away. Others threaten.

A willing DEALER nods. Leads him down the block.

INT. SLIDERS STRIP CLUB - OFFICE - NIGHT

A thumpa-thumpa of a techno beat. Men catcalling strippers from beyond the door.

ANGEL'S OFFICE

Angel grabs Alicia's face.

ANGEL
Glad you're back, baby?

She recoils. He slips in a CD to his stereo.

ANGEL
Now, I want you to strip. Real
sexy hot for me.

He presses "play". Bette Midler sings: *WIND BENEATH MY WINGS*.

"Ohhhh, oh, oh, oh, ohhh. It must have been cold there in my shadow, to never have sunlight on your face/You were content to let me shine, that's your way/You always walked a step behind."

Moved, Angel mouths the words. Alicia tries to strip to the song but Bette Midler doesn't cut it.

TWO GOONS burst into the room. They DRAG MR. GENETTI, Alicia's deli pal, over to Angel.

ANGEL
Where the fuck is my money?

MR. GENETTI
Made very little this week. No
business.

Alicia squeezes her throat.

ALICIA
Angel. I know this guy. He's okay
for it. Really.

They exchange a smile.

Enraged, Angel's nostrils flail. In a flash, he pulls his gun and PISTOL WHIPS the man.

The two goons support the limp body.

ANGEL
Get him out!

They obey.

ANGEL

See, the only friend a man really
got is his gun. It's always with
me and--

He snaps open the LOADED BARREL.

ANGEL

Always loaded.

INT. SLIDERS STRIP CLUB - SAME TIME

MAIN BAR

Earsplitting house music. Father Pete accompanies his dealer.
He motions for the priest to wait by the bar.

Fatigued, the clergyman agrees. A stripper offers a lap
dance. He declines.

ANGEL'S OFFICE

Angel SNORTS the equivalent of a public school teacher's
monthly pay check up his nose.

Wired, he jumps like he's riding a pogo stick.

ANGEL

All banged up! All banged up!

MAIN BAR

Father Pete waits impatiently.

Searching for his dealer, he spies Alicia through the open
office door. Curious, he walks over.

ANGEL'S OFFICE

Angel strides over and pulls his fingers through her greasy
hair.

ANGEL

Later baby, I got some clients
comin' to the club. You show them
a good time.

He squeezes her breast. She repels.

ALICIA

Pig.

He SLAPS her face. She doubles over. Father Pete rushes in.

FATHER PETE

Don't touch her!

ANGEL

(hopping)

Who we got here? Another jealous boyfriend?

ALICIA

Father, just leave. Please.

ANGEL

Father? A priest makin' house calls? Nice.

FATHER PETE

The young lady and I are leaving.

Angel draws his gun.

ANGEL

Fuckin' touch her and you're movin' into heaven tonight.

Detoxifying, the priest shakes.

ANGEL

Wait here, wait. You're the pill poppin' priest! That's why you're here. You came to score shit.

Laughing, he pulls open his drawer. He TOSSES A BOTTLE of Vicodin in the air.

The priest licks his lips. Smiling, Angel pops the bottle and SCATTERS PILLS across the floor.

ANGEL

Fetch.

The priest dives for his drug. He gathers the pills in his hands.

ANGEL

Good boy.

Eye-level Alicia stares at the priest. With a FIST FULL OF PILLS, he locks eyes with Alicia.

They communicate volumes.

Father Pete ROTATES his palm downwards. The pills dump onto the floor.

Angel squats and whispers into the man's ear.

ANGEL

Go ahead. God's not here tonight.

Father Pete LUNGES for the thug. Hands around his throat. Angel is thrown back. The priest PUMMELING the man.

Angel gains leverage and flips the priest. He PULLS his gun, and pistol whips the chubby man.

Father Pete collapses. Alicia rushes to him. Both SPRAWLED on the floor.

Angel regains his balance, blood trickling into his mouth. He POINTS his gun at the pair.

ANGEL

Alicia knows I'm full up on
bullets. The first few into you.
Then into the whore.

Alicia cuddles the priest in her lap like Mother and Child. She stares at Angel defiantly.

He POINTS THE BARREL at the girl's forehead.

SLOW MOTION--

THE HAMMER STRIKING THE FLINT--

Nothing. No bullet.

CONFUSED, ANGEL SQUEEZES THE TRIGGER AGAIN.

Nothing--

HE EMPTIES THE WHOLE CHAMBER INTO ALICIA AND FATHER PETE.

Again nothing--

The two almost-victims open their eyes. They stare at Angel. A tear travels down Alicia's cheek as she exhales.

ANGEL

It's was loaded. I just loaded it.

Alicia looks to Father Pete. Not testing their luck, they hustle onto their feet.

They make a HASTY EXIT.

Angel, coked up and defiant, POINTS THE GUN at his face.

Beaming, he squeezes the trigger.

NOTHING--

He jumps in place. On a roll, he takes aim again.

ANGEL
ALL BANGED UP!

A bullet rips past his tonsils. HE FALLS DEAD.

EXT. AMSTERDAM AVENUE - 3 AM

The mismatched duo meander along the street.

FATHER PETE
My words. I killed her.

Alicia doesn't disagree.

ALICIA
How will you make it up to Sushi?

FATHER PETE
You mean atone? An eternity in
hell wouldn't be punishment
enough.

ALICIA
Father, get off the cross, they
need the wood.

He smiles.

ALICIA
Listen, when you go to court, wear
your priest stuff. You'll get a
suspended sentence.

FATHER PETE
You sure?

ALICIA
Oh, yeah. And rehab is like sleep
away camp with the celebrities
roastin' your marshmallows.

FATHER PETE
What you and I had before was a
bona fide miracle.

Alicia thinks on it for a minute.

ALICIA

Miracles don't happen for people
like me.

FATHER PETE

What are you going to do?

ALICIA

Dunno. Got no ties now. You?

Thinking carefully.

FATHER PETE

Jesus never heard of me and it's
too late to introduce myself now.
So, I guess, find out why I became
a priest in the first place? Work
it all backwards.

ALICIA

(nodding)

Tell me how it turns out.

They respectfully nod to each other then walk off, neither
looking back.

EXT. WEST 168TH STREET - DAWN

Alicia wanders down the quiet street with her arms crossed
and head bowed.

INT. OUR LADY DELI - MORNING

Filomena Genetti, draped in black and despondent from her
husband's death, pushes Alicia's grilled cheese sandwich
across the counter.

The deli stripped of all religious objects.

ALICIA

I'm sorry about your husband. He
was a real nice man and all.

The widow looks away. Alicia, takes her sandwich and walks to
the door.

FAITHFUL HELEN and her DAUGHTER ANNE enter.

FAITHFUL HELEN

Filomena! Look what happened to my
baby! It's a miracle! A miracle!
Look my--

She rushes to Alicia.

FAITHFUL HELEN

Oh my God! You! Thank you. Oh my
God, thank for what you did for my
daughter.

Alicia shrugs.

FAITHFUL HELEN

She can hear. The Virgin
Mary...on the roof. She can hear
for the first time. Anne, Anne
baby, say...say, "thank you."

DAUGHTER ANNE

(stilted)

Thank you.

MRS. GENETTI

Jesus, Mary and Joseph! She never
could hear before. Never! All the
years...

Filomena pops open her cash register, snatches her rosaries
and PRAYS fervently for the first time since her husband's
death.

ALICIA

Impossible. It was just a
sandwich. It didn't--

Kissing her daughter--

FAITHFUL HELEN

It did.

(slowly)

You did.

A sharp pain. Alicia rubs her head. Blood.

INT. COLUMBIA PRESBYTERIAN EMERGENCY ROOM - MORNING

Alicia sits on a gurney. Two EMERGENCY NURSES attend.

FEMALE NURSE

Four stitches. He got you good.

Alicia shrugs.

MALE NURSE

Do you want to make out a police
report?

ALICIA

Nothin' to report.

DR. TOSHI, reading test results, stops next to Alicia.

DR. TOSHI
A contusion. No concussion.

ALICIA
My lucky day.

DR. TOSHI
It is. You're pregnant.

Alicia stares at the doctor dumbfounded.

ALICIA
Impossible. I had three...I got
messed up inside. Other doctors
confirmed it.

DR. TOSHI
They were wrong, Alicia.

ALICIA
I've had sex with over a thousand
men. I never--

The male nurse smiles.

DR. TOSHI
I can write you a referral for
prenatal care at our clinic. Come
in Monday.

She's gone. Alicia cups her head in her hand. The male nurse
hands over some gauze and bandages.

MALE NURSE
Not good news?

ALICIA
Impossible.

He scribbles on hospital stationary.

MALE NURSE
Look, I'm new in town. No friends.
Give me a call.

ALICIA
You hittin' on me? Knocked up and
with stitches in my head?

MALE NURSE
Just a friend.

He pushes the slip of paper in her pocketbook along with several gauze and bandages.

MALE NURSE

For the road. Okay?

EXT. WEST 168TH STREET - MORNING

Alicia sits on a park bench. No place to go. The city rushes around her.

A COLLEGE GIRL rushes past on her cell phone.

COLLEGE GIRL

I love sushi! I know a place on Bank street. We can--

Alicia's ears prick up. A tear rolls down her face. She opens her purse, grabs a gauze roll, and dabs her cheek.

She looks into her purse and pulls out a slip of hospital stationary.

CLOSE ON - SLIP OF PAPER

One side reads: Columbia Presbyterian Hospital.

The other: JOSEPH. 917-371-0345. *DON'T BE AFRAID*.

GIRL

Don't be afraid.

Startled, Alicia looks up. A FILIPINO GIRL, (7), smiles at her.

ALICIA

I'm not.

MOM tugs her hand.

MOM

Don't bother the nice lady. Come on, Alicia.

Alicia's eyes widen. Pulled down the sidewalk, the little girl looks back.

A radiant smile and a nod. Alicia returns the gesture.

Rising slowly, unsteady at first, she takes a few steps down the avenue.

Crossing her arms over her belly, she hugs tight. Alicia's face determined yet serene.

Her pace quickens, upright and confident, she enters into her BRAVE NEW WORLD.

SLOW DISSOLVE TO:

INT. GOLDEN CASINO - DAY

Mammoth neon display case.

A casino workman opens the case. He pushes two items apart. A niche created.

He WEDGES the grilled cheese virgin into her new spot and closes the glass door.

--To one side

A puppy confabbed from chewed gum.

--And the other

An Elvis bust constructed from butterfly wings.

A neon sign BLINKS atop the display. It reads:

"YOU GOTTA SEE IT - TO BELIEVE IT!"

FADE OUT:

END

