

Don't Be Afraid

A family of three try and find safety from the outside
world after relocating to a city.

FADE IN.

INT. APARTMENT BEDROOM - AFTERNOON

A quiet bedroom sits still. Gunshots, screams, and police sirens fill the air with chaos. The outside world comes to an end as the bedroom watches. A closet to the side of the bedroom stands motionless. The sound of lips smacking softly leaves the closet doors.

INT. APARTMENT BEDROOM CLOSET - AFTERNOON

Lines of light come through the cracks of the wooden closet door, revealing YVETTE, an 8-year-old African American girl. Yvette is sitting on the floor of the closet, knees to her face. Jackets hover on hangers above her. Yvette's eyes are closed tightly. She cups her ears with her hands. Her tear-stained cheeks move to the cadence of her jaw. Yvette is chewing gum, the only sensation she's choosing to feel at the moment, sending the noise across the silent closet. The noise from the outside slowly fills her with more anxiety she can cope. Yvette begins rocking back and forth.

MARK (O.S)

I'm just trying to do what's
best for her.

BERNADETTE (O.S)

I know that.

INT. APARTMENT LIVING ROOM - NIGHT

MARK, a late 30s, scruffy African American male, stands at the kitchen counter speaking with his wife, BERNADETTE, a late 30's, skinny African American female. Cans of food and bottled water fill the kitchen counter. Bernadette is opening a can of food on the opposite side of the counter as Mark. An open door in the background shows the bedroom from before, with Yvette sleeping in the bed. Mark and Bernadette fill the room with tension with their body language.

MARK

I want you to know that.

BERNADETTE

I do know that. It's just hard.

MARK

What do you want me to say?
They told us to come here.
They told us the city was
going to be safe.

BERNADETTE

Well it's not, Mark. Three
outbreaks in the past week.
How can you be so blind?

MARK

You don't think I know that?
I was there trying to hold
the lines.

BERNADETTE (heated)

Then let's leave! Why are we
staying here?

MARK (yelling)

Because it's safe! Do you not
remember how it was out
there? The shit we went
through to get here? Where
would be go? You think any
place is going to be better
than this?

Mark and Bernadette take a pause from arguing, frustrated.

MARK

We have food. A roof. You
know the last time Yvette
actually slept on a bed? She
even got a pack of gum from
the last run for food. It's
fine here. We're safe.

Bernadette looks at Mark.

BERNADETTE

I love you, sweetie. But
coming here. To this place.
Just wasn't the right call.

INT. BEDROOM - AFTERNOON

Mark runs into the room, looking for Yvette. A gash on the back of Mark's head crawls blood along his hair. He finds her in the corner of the room, sitting next to the bedroom bed. Her knees are to her face, clutching to her shin bones with both hands. Mark runs up to her and kneels in front of her.

MARK (out of breath)

Yvette. Sweetie. Are you
okay?

Yvette nods at her father, shaken by his frantic demeanor.

YVETTE (scared)

What's goi...

A woman's scream is heard, cutting off Yvette. Mark looks back to the door at the sound of the scream. Yvette sees a bloody gash on the side of Mark's head.

YVETTE

That sounded like mom...

Mark looks back at his daughter, pausing, with no answer.

MARK

Do you have your gum?

Yvette nods, and begins to cry.

MARK

Okay. Okay. Where is it?

Yvette slowly reaches for a PACK OF GUM in her pocket. She holds it up to her father. Mark holds Yvette's hands in his, holding her gum close to her.

MARK

Listen to me, honey. I need
you to hide somewhere while
Daddy takes care of
something.

Mark looks around and sees a wooden sliding door leading to a closet in the room. He runs over and opens the closet, revealing hanging jackets hovering over boxes. Mark slides the boxes to one side, and ushers Yvette to get into the closet. Yvette gets off the floor and runs over. She stands in the closet as Mark kneels in front of her.

MARK

Okay. Take a piece of gum and
put it in your mouth. I want
you to sit in the corner of
the closet. Put your hands to
your ears and close your
eyes.

Mark puts his hands on Yvette's cheeks. Their eyes meet.

MARK (continued)

Stay in the closet and keep
chewing. When the gum is out
of flavor, I want you to
quietly get out of the closet
and run. Get out of the room,
out of the building, and out
of the city. No matter what
you see, I need you to just
run.

YVETTE

Can I just...

MARK (screaming)

No!

Yvette flinches to Mark's answer, blinking her eyes and stepping back. Mark immediately regrets his response.

MARK

Just... I need you to be safe.
Please.

YVETTE

What about you? What about
mommy?

Mark looks down, unsure of what to say. He looks back at Yvette.

MARK

I need you to be strong,
baby. Your mother and I have
always been there for you,
but you can take care of
yourself. If you ever get
into trouble, you run. Run
away from anyone that scares
you.

Yvette nods, clutching her pack of gum. Tears run down her cheeks.

MARK

Don't be afraid. You're
strong.

Mark looks into his daughter's eyes, wiping the tears on her cheek. His eyes glisten. He hugs Yvette, hiding his eyes from his daughter, burying them in her shoulder. Mark kisses Yvette on the forehead and gets onto his feet. He looks into Yvette's eyes one more time before closing the closet door. He turns and begins walking towards the door, speaking through the closed closet door to his daughter one last time.

MARK

I...

Mark looks at the ground, defeated.

MARK
I'm sorry, honey.

Mark turns back towards the door and runs out.

End.