

7 EXT. STREET - CONTINUOUS

Theo gets off the bus in Queens. MR. GRACIE (54), a figure from Theo's childhood, walks past. Theo looks again and Gracie is gone.

Theo arrives at a row of flats. MARIA (33) opens the door a little at first, and then all the way. She's pretty, but not too pretty. Her clothes are baggy and functional. Her baby, KYLE, is cradled in her arms. She laughs, then Theo laughs.

MARIA  
You show up at the oddest times.

THEO  
It's only three o'clock.

MARIA  
Funny dumbo. You know what I mean.

8 INT. MARIA'S APARTMENT - DAY

Maria and Theo are seated at the kitchen table drinking tea. Maria holds Kyle. It's a small, one-bedroom. The kitchen and living room are the same room. There's an enormous box of corn flakes above the fridge, three pans of different sizes hanging over the stove. Some toys on the floor, and a shelf filled with cheap paperbacks. Maria nods to the blisters on the back of Theo's hands.

THEO  
Bacon grease.

MARIA  
Oh. Both hands?

THEO  
I know.

MARIA  
I don't know.

Maria pats her child. Theo watches her, self-conscious of the blisters.

THEO  
He's like a little person.

MARIA  
He is. Except he knows what he wants. His name's Kyle.

THEO  
I would have named him Kyle too.

MARIA  
You'd be a good dad. Where'd you go?

THEO  
I live in San Francisco now.

Maria smiles.

MARIA  
You went as far as you could without drowning.

THEO  
Every day it's the same temperature so you don't notice the seasons passing. My girlfriend didn't want me to come here.

MARIA  
That explains the bacon grease. I knew you'd come back around. You're like a boomerang. You want some more tea?

THEO  
Sure. It's good tea.

MARIA  
Hold on a second. And let me change this little guy.

Maria keeps Kyle against her as she reaches over to light the stove. The flame pops beneath the kettle and Maria lays Kyle on top of a towel on the counter.

THEO  
This isn't a bad place. Bigger than my place. I live across the street from a chocolate factory. I'm thinking about moving somewhere nicer.

MARIA  
Hand me one.

Maria points to a box and Theo gets up and grabs her a diaper.

THEO  
How about you?

MARIA  
Me? I'm still here.

THEO  
Ha ha.

MARIA  
Well, there was Joe. That's most of it. You met him.

THEO  
I did. I met him the hard way.

MARIA  
Everybody met Joe the hard way.  
Hey, I'm sorry. I shouldn't have let him do that.

THEO  
It was out of your hands.

Maria shuts the burner, bouncing the child. Still holding Kyle she takes the pot from the stove, refills Theo's cup. She focuses on Theo's hand again, then places the kettle back on the stove top.

MARIA  
I've had burns like those. The kind you get when somebody doesn't want you to leave. They're going to scar. First they'll become little craters on your wrist. Then, as they heal, they'll leave pale round marks. I have eight of them on my right thigh, starting on my knee and finishing at my waist. They're like buttons.

THEO  
What are we talking about?

MARIA  
I was telling you my story. How did you find me, by the way?

THEO  
People aren't that hard to find. You can find anybody for fifty dollars these days.

MARIA  
He choked a man to death in front of the Pine Lodge. I saw him do it.  
(MORE)

MARIA (CONT'D)  
They gave him forty years.

The baby grips at the table. His face poking just above the ledge.

THEO  
I see you.

Maria plays with Kyle some more, bouncing him on her leg, taking his tiny fist in her mouth.

THEO (CONT'D)  
You're spoiling him.

MARIA  
That's OK. One of us needs to be spoiled. Makes up for the cheap diapers.

Maria reaches across the table to touch the blisters on the back of Theo's hand. He starts to pull away.

MARIA (CONT'D)  
Hold on a second.

She touches the blister carefully. As she focuses on Theo he visibly relaxes and it's easy to imagine falling in love with her.

MARIA (CONT'D)  
You always find someone to hurt you. If you pop these you have to cover them with Bacitracin and a Band-Aid. But you shouldn't pop them. They'll heal better if you don't.

Theo takes in the apartment more closely. The door to the bedroom is open slightly. There's a cable sticking out of the wall not connected to anything.

THEO  
You miss Joe?

MARIA  
I loved him so much.

Theo nods a little sadly.

THEO  
I guess 'cause you give someone a quarter doesn't mean they owe you twenty-five cents.

MARIA  
Don't talk like that.

THEO  
I thought your story was my story,  
but your story is the story of  
Maria and Joe.

MARIA  
No. My story is the story of Maria  
and Kyle.

THEO  
Where do I fit in?

MARIA  
First love. Of course.

THEO  
That's not bad.

He looks closely at Kyle while Maria nurses him, realizing something.

THEO (CONT'D)  
He's not Joe's child is he?

MARIA  
No. He's not. He's only my child.

THEO  
Can I hold him?

Maria hands Kyle to Theo and Theo holds the baby while the baby stands on his leg. The baby smiles at Theo.

THEO (TO KYLE) (CONT'D)  
When I met your mom I was sixteen  
years old. The police dropped her  
off at the home. It was the middle  
of the summer and it seemed like  
everyone had just been released  
from somewhere. We were playing  
basketball. She walked right past  
us wearing all pink. Pink shorts,  
pink top, pink earrings. I thought  
she looked like an unopened piece  
of candy.

MARIA  
I'm glad he doesn't understand you.

THEO

I bet he understands more than we do.

He bounces Kyle gently.

MARIA

See. You're a natural. You could have a son and he'd quote you when he was older.

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EXT. MARIA'S PORCH - NIGHT

Maria stands inside the door holding Kyle. Theo stands on the porch. The light from an overhead bulb or from inside giving the impression that the rest of the world is dark.

MARIA

It was nice to see you again.

THEO

It's not so late. We could go to Campbell, have Chinese food or something.

MARIA

That sounds fun but it's getting near this guy's bedtime. Anyway, we have food here.

THEO

I came a long way.

MARIA

And here you are, back where you started.

Theo smiles, takes in a deep breath and reaches for Maria. She loves him but can't give him what he wants. They look like they're going to come closer and kiss, but they don't.

THEO

My story is the story of Theo and Maria. That's my only story.

MARIA

You have a lot of stories. Don't sell yourself short.

A painful moment passes.

THEO

Ah hell. All right then.

MARIA

You're going back to San Francisco?  
Maybe pick up a few more burn  
marks?

THEO

No. I'm going to run away one more  
time. I think I've got one left in  
me.

MARIA

You're not actually a runaway. Or  
you weren't before.

She's as close to kissing him as she's ever been, right when  
he finds his resolve.

THEO

It's just a word. The only times I  
ever regretted it was when I went  
back.