

MARIANNE

EXT. STREET. NEAR RESTAURANT. NEW YORK. NIGHT.

A distant restaurant illuminating a dimly lit street-

MARIANNE waiting inside the bar, seated, with a drink, clearly there for some time.

BRANDON stands watching from a distance, at the end of smoking a cigarette. He flicks the cigarette stub away. He smooths down the collar of his shirt, checking his reflection in a store window for the third time. He looks back, makes to cross the street-

A gang of TEENAGERS pass-

BRANDON instinctively hangs back, hating himself, the moment once more missed. He brushes fluff off his jacket, waits. Brushes a second time, pulling at a loose thread on his button.

BRANDON's eyes dart back across the street, a quiet agitation growing-

MARIANNE just visible, eyes checking the room, with quiet concern.

BRANDON makes to cross, hovering on the edge of the gutter until-

INT. RESTAURANT. NEAR CINEMA. NEW YORK. NIGHT.

BRANDON and MARIANNE seated at a table. A WAITER hovers tweaking the cutlery around them-

WAITER (O.S.)

The soup of the day is tomato with basil oil and Parmesan crostini. The special is marinated swordfish, tabbouleh and Moroccan Chermoula. It's really good.

MARIANNE smiles, eyes darting to BRANDON, playful. The WAITER oblivious, clearly on a roll.

WAITER (O.S.) (CONT'D)

We're also serving a DeBragga & Splitler New York Strip with a side order of fries. And the salad is snow pea and radish with a cider vinaigrette. Can I get you water?

BRANDON nods-

BRANDON

Yeah.

AMY KAUBMAN COSTUMS

FYI

1/9

The WAITER pours water-

WAITER
The wine menu's right under-

BRANDON pulls out a wine menu hidden under his bread plate.

BRANDON
You want wine?

MARIANNE
Sure.

→ Start

BRANDON
What? Like white? Red?

MARIANNE
Red maybe..

The WAITER hovers, pointing to a red on the menu-

WAITER
The Pinot's...light..If you like
it like-

The GLIDE of a napkin across BRANDON's lap, the WAITER a
constant presence, on the edge of irritating.

WAITER (CONT'D)
Would you like bread?

BRANDON looks to MARIANNE. She shakes her head.

BRANDON
No. We're good.

The WAITER smiles, at last moves off-

They sit looking at their menus.

BRANDON steals a moment, eyes tracing over-

MARIANNE's fingers playing with the edge of her menu-

The flutter of her lashes-

Nipples ghosting her dress.

An ring indent around her wedding finger, the shrink of
skin.

BRANDON (CONT'D)
You been married?

MARIANNE
Separated.

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BRANDON
Recently?

MARIANNE smiles-

MARIANNE
Yes.

BRANDON
Nice to be free?

MARIANNE
No not really.

The dip of skin, soft under her chin, a finger grazing over it, nervously.

BRANDON
He left you?

MARIANNE
No.

(beat)
You're very-

BRANDON
..curious..Always..For the life of me I don't know why anyone wants marriage.

MARIANNE
That's sad.

BRANDON
You still believe in it?

MARIANNE
In relationships? Yeah. It has to matter. We have to matter to one another. Otherwise why are we here. Why are you here?

BRANDON
The food's meant to be great.

MARIANNE nods-

MARIANNE
You're nervous.

BRANDON
No.

MARIANNE smiles looking back at the menu-

3/a

MARIANNE

Yes you are. Your hands are shaking.

BRANDON caught out, the menu shaking a little in his hands.

MARIANNE (CONT'D)

You can see it when you hold the menu.

The WAITER returns-

WAITER

I forgot to say the crab comes in the shell.

BRANDON closes his menu, hands it back to the WAITER.

BRANDON

I'll take the lamb.

The WAITER scrawls it down on a pad, barely looking up.

WAITER

No appetizer?

BRANDON

(looking to MARIANNE)
You want-?

MARIANNE shrugs, closes her menu.

MARIANNE

I'm good. Me too.

WAITER

Any sides with that?

BRANDON hesitates, looks back at the menu.

MARIANNE

Maybe some green beans.

BRANDON

Yeah?

WAITER

You like medium rare? The lamb?

BRANDON

More medium than rare.

WAITER

We recommend it pretty pink.

The WAITER waits-

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BRANDON looks at MARIANNE, they giggle.

BRANDON

Oh..OK.

The WAITER takes the menus. .

BRANDON (CONT'D)

Why would I be nervous?

MARIANNE smiles, holds his look.

MARIANNE

It's a date.

BRANDON shrugs-

BRANDON

It's no big deal.

MARIANNE

It took me an hour to work out what to wear.

BRANDON

You look pretty.

MARIANNE shrugs, smiles-

MARIANNE

You want to screw me.

BRANDON laughs-

The WAITER reaches for the wine menu.

WAITER

Did we decide on the wine?

BRANDON hesitates, on the edge but-

BRANDON

Urgh..Yeah..

BRANDON scours the wine menu at a loss-

BRANDON (CONT'D)

The Pinot-

BRANDON looks to MARIANNE, she shrugs-

BRANDON (CONT'D)

Was it the Pinot you said was-

WAITER

Great..Great choice.

5/9

The WAITER nods, at last moves off-

BRANDON

Great.

MARIANNE smiles-

BRANDON (CONT'D)

I want to screw you.

MARIANNE

There's cheaper ways to get a fuck.

BRANDON laughs-

MARIANNE (CONT'D)

Where you from?

BRANDON

New Jersey.

MARIANNE

That's nice. You can visit easy.

BRANDON nods, shrugs-

MARIANNE (CONT'D)

Your family?

BRANDON shrugs-

BRANDON

Not so much.

MARIANNE

Don't like marriage. Don't like family.

BRANDON

I got a sister. I like my sister.

The WAITER approaches, a bottle of wine in hand.

WAITER

Here you go.

He pours a little into BRANDON's wine. BRANDON shrugs, drinks.

BRANDON

It's umm-

WAITER

Isn't it-

6/9

MARIANNE smiles at the WAITER, the WAITER pours for them both.

WAITER (CONT'D)
I'll leave the bottle here.

The WAITER slides the bottle down, moving off-

MARIANNE
She younger than you? *

BRANDON
Yeah.

MARIANNE
I got two. We use to share a room.

BRANDON nods-

BRANDON
It's not realistic. The idea of like one person..like just screwing one person for the rest of your life.

MARIANNE
Why not?

BRANDON
Cause where do you go? You come to a restaurant. You order the same thing every night. Because you love it. Because you can't get enough of it. You tell everyone you know the service is just the way you want it and you can't get the taste out of your head. So you go the next night and the next night. And that's it...That's the only place you can eat for the rest of your life..And there's only one thing on the menu..That's hell. That's a living hell. As much as you may have sworn that you wouldn't eat anywhere else..I promise you..You will hunger for take out..You will want to stop at that other place on the corner..Because the same thing..every night..It's inhumane...I'm not being cruel..I'm just telling you how I see it.

MARIANNE considers, lips grazing the rim of the glass.

7/9

MARIANNE

Then you're eating in the wrong restaurant.

BRANDON

Most days I eat standing up and on my own.

MARIANNE

How d'you find Christmas?

BRANDON

I stay home.

BRANDON's foot lightly taps his chair leg, nervously, caught under MARIANNE's quiet inquisitive hold.

WAITER

Is everything alright?

BRANDON nods-

BRANDON

Fine.

WAITER

I told you the Pinot was great.

The WAITER moves away-

HARSH MALE LAUGHTER across the room-

BRANDON inwardly recoils a little, eyes looking across the room to-

A table of BUSINESSMEN from out of town, a couple of bottles of wine down.

MARIANNE

There was a guy like you..lived in his car next to my uncle's place....Slept with every woman in our town til there was no one else left..Then he started right over again..Women always took him back.

You use to see him in his car. You'd say 'What's wrong, Ronnie?' Everytime..Same reply 'I don't know..I don't know'

BRANDON

That's love for you.

MARIANNE

I don't think he loved any of them.

8/9

MARIANNE smiles at him, the crinkle around her eyes, quietly enticing BRANDON.

MARIANNE (CONT'D)

That's why he cried.

BRANDON laughs.

BRANDON

You made that shit up.

MARIANNE smiles, shrugs-

MARIANNE

You'll never know.

MARIANNE holds his looks, her heart in his palm.

BRANDON looks away, his foot momentarily at a still.

END
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