

Fade in:

Int: Kitchen - 1 AM Night

Momma Marguerrete, sitting across from her daughter in a light blue robe, stirs tiny white marshmallows in a cup of hot chocolate. Hope, in cartoon plastered pajamas, watches each and every piece of gooey goodness swirl like stars in the milky way galaxy. Her eyes are locked on the white mug fearlessly. She begins leaning in as much as an 8-year-old can on a tall wooden chair to smell the cocoa. She smiles, kicks the air, and tightens her grip on the tabletop in excitement. Each completed swirl creates a tiny *ding* of noise as the spoon hits the inside of the ceramic cup. A stovetop clock to the left side of the table illuminates the cramped kitchen with a faint green glow. They both know they are not to turn on the kitchen light.

- 1:02 AM -

Momma stirs slowly, casting her eyes at what she can see of Hope and back down to the white mug.

Ding

Ding

Ding

MOMMA MARGUERITE

(whispers) 'Ope, you know this has to be the last time alright.

Ding

Ding

Ding

HOPE

(whispers and giggles) Yes, Momma.

Hope kicks the air a little. She imagines her mom's beautiful creamy beautiful brown face looking down at her smiling with open arms. She imagines the taste of the marshmallows and hot chocolate doing jumping jacks across her teeth while she dances to express her happiness. Hope looks at nothing else but the flecks of green light bouncing off of the white mug. Her excitement is that of an eagle in a cage.

MOMMA MARGUERITE
 (whispers while looking directly at Hope) Hot cocoa is expensive. But, once I get that job at Rochester's, you know... Things will change.

Ding

Ding

MOMMA MARGUERITE
 (whispering) You believe me, right?

Hope does not look at her mother.

HOPE
 (whispers, half paying attention) Yes, Momma. Can I please...

Ding

MOMMA MARGUERITE
 (whispers) We do our best for you Hope. You know this.

Ding

MOMMA MARGUERITE
 (in a stern whisper) Do you hear me?

Hope kicks as fast as she can in the air, smiling as wide as possible. Her body twitches slightly as she senses a change in Momma's tone but remains all consumed by her imagination. Momma lets go of the spoon and stops swirling.

HOPE
 (giggles at a normal volume)

Immediately, Momma grabs both of Hope's legs as she kicks brazenly under the table with one hand and in the other covers Hope's mouth. She waits, looks up to the ceiling above, and listens.

Deafening Silence

MOMMA MARGUERITE
 (in an angered pleading whisper) What did I tell you before we came down here? I said, if you aren't quiet you wouldn't get your damn drink. You be quiet now! If you aren't, I'll make

you wish you hadn't wakened up from
that dream!

Momma could not see Hope's face well in the dim light, but her hands tell her what she needs to know. Hope is both tense and relaxed, emotionally constricted but physically loose. Her brown soft skin shivers slightly in sharp fear. Momma loosens her left hand off of Hope's legs slowly, finger by finger. On her right hand, Momma can feel a liquid pooling on her hand by the side of her pinky. She lets go of Hope's mouth.

- 1:22pm -

MOMMA MARGUERITE

(whispers in a more neutral tone)
Breathe. You are fine. Wipe your face.
Stay. Quiet.

Hope nods as hard as she can, forcing the cool air around Momma to respond to her. She did as she was told and wiped her face. Her chair creaks a little as she stains her pajamas with tears and sits up. Momma looks back down at the drink, barely making its shape out. Even after all the jostling, it remained untouched. She lifts the hot chocolate, removes the spoon, leaves it on the table, blows into the mug, and places it softly as close to Hope as she can manage.

MOMMA MARGUERITE

(whispering in a sweeter tone) Drink.

The two both wait for something to happen for a few seconds. Hope does nothing, despite her mother's command. Hope then begins to play with her hands and shift squeamishly.

MOMMA MARGUERITE

(whispering) Hope?

Hope curls up onto a ball on the chair, holding her legs where Momma had touched as tightly as her eight-year-old arms manage. As she lifts her legs onto the chair, the dim green light of the stovetop clock illuminated large handprints could be seen across her ragged legs. They were larger than Momma's and had seemingly been layered over multiple times by different hands. Hope buries her face into her chest protected by her legs. Although the full extent of the scars on Hope's legs could not be seen, Momma remembers then that she scared Hope more than she intended to. She looks away at the clock to not let this wave of emotion hit her as it always had before.

- 1:42 -

Momma breathes a silent breath, restoring her resolve. She turns back to her daughter and waits for a moment. She twitches and slowly pushes her chair back. No noise yet had been made in the near pitch-black room. Momma turns to her cabinets. Although they could not be seen, Momma walked toward and reached for the white handle. She pulls and reaches inside to reveal a small cigarette lighter and a votive candle. Momma turns back around to look at Hope. She then walks past the table, dodging creaky floor tiles, shoes, and newspapers. Momma's faded blue slippers allowed her to be as quiet as a bunny hiding from a wolf. She kneels to the right of Hope, lights the votive, places it on the table, and looks at her daughter.

MOMMA MARGUERITE

(whispering into Hope's ear) Baby, no one is going to hurt you.

Hope remains unmoved.

MOMMA MARGUERITE

(whispering into Hope's right ear)
Where in the world am I going to get hope during dark days? There must be someone that can help me. Where is my one and only true love?

Hope lifts her head and turns to Momma. She was biting her lip. Her face was dry and her deep walnut eyes shimmered.

HOPE

(whispering) Right here.

Momma smiles.

MOMMA MARGUERITE

(whispering) Oh my! There you are. I looked everywhere. My heart was gone. Where did you go?

HOPE

(whispering and giggles slightly) I was right here the whole time.

MOMMA MARGUERITE

(whispering) No! Wait... Where did you go? Did I lose you again?!

Hope giggles again. She grabs her mother's face.

HOPE

(whispers as loud as she can) I'm
right here Momma! Can't you see me?

MOMMA MARGUERITE

(gasps quietly and whispers) There you
are!

Momma embraces her daughter. Hope clenches onto the back of
her mother's long robe.

MOMMA MARGUERITE

(whispers into Hope's left ear)
Promise you won't run away again? How
can I live without my heart?

HOPE

(whispers) okay, Momma.

Momma picks up the hot chocolate from the table, again
demonstrating her night vision.

MOMMA MARGUERITE

(whispers) Sure smells delicious.

Hope smells the chocolate. She grabs the mug from her mother.
For the first time that night, Hope notices all of the new
creases and slight scars on the face of her mother. She
didn't care, she was still as beautiful as she had always
been. Hope takes a sip. She then lets go of the mug, gasping
as if she were a dog who had just run 5 miles. Momma attempts
to catch the mug to get nothing but burned at the extremely
hot cocoa.

Crash.

Silence.

Silence.

Momma looks at Hope, she does not remark about her hands. She
looks up and listens.

Footsteps slowly shift the floor above.

MOMMA MARGUERITE

Hide.

