

THE FRECKLED MANNEQUIN

Written by

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1. EXT. NEW YORK CITY UPPER MANHATTAN - EVENING

Rain pours down from the sky on a late summer's evening. The city is cast in shadow, prematurely darkened by a set of angry clouds. Water splashes up against the urban streets. We hear the rushing of air and the occasional lonely car. A siren whines off in the distance in a minor key. A man wanders the streets, basking in the down-pouring rain. The sharp pitter patter of feet against pavement as JOSHUA, an 18 year old Latinx teenager whizzes into frame. He is slim and unimposing, wears jeans, a t-shirt, and a loose backpack, which flails behind him as he runs down Lennox Ave. He is out of breath and soaked to the bone. He runs down several city blocks.

2. INT. SOPHIA'S TAPAS - EVENING

A quiet, dark, and somewhat grungy restaurant on the upper west side of Manhattan. JOSHUA races through the front door and into the empty dining room. The bell at the front tinkles. Without a word, he walks towards the employee bathroom at the back of the restaurant. JULIO, a charming thirty-something with a neat smile and a false twinkle in his eye leans up against the bar. His eyes turn sharply to JOSHUA who stares at the ground timidly.

JULIO

Hey buddy, you're late. 6 o'clock means 6 o'clock, I'm serious.

JOSHUA

I'm sorry.

JULIO

I need you here, ready to go.

JOSHUA

I'm sorry.

He dashes to the back.

3. INT. - EMPLOYEE BATHROOM - EVENING

JOSHUA throws off his soaked through t-shirt. He grabs a handful of paper towels and begins to wipe water and sweat from his chest and torso. He quickly opens his backpack and pulls on a white button down and black slacks. He clumsily steps into a pair of worn out, narrow black shoes.

4. INT. RESTAURANT FLOOR - NIGHT

JOSHUA stands with his hands behind his back at attention. He dutifully scans the tables full of laughing diners. A couple vacates their table which JOSHUA immediately busses and resets. He glances to the front of the restaurant where JULIO directs a waitress to wipe up a spill. He spins a glass in his hand and pours a vodka soda for a young woman at the bar. JOSHUA walks through the restaurant with a pitcher of water. He quietly reaches over to fill an older patron's water glass. Without a word or a glance, and deep in conversation, she impatiently runs her hand over the top of her glass, blocking JOSHUA from refilling it. He eyes her and moves on.

5. INT. SUBWAY TRAIN - NIGHT

JOSHUA rides the A train all the way uptown. He slips air pods into his ears and curls up into the seat. The music blares. JOSHUA falls into a lull, letting his mind go. He exits at 191st street, walks up the street, then makes a fast, quad-powered run up a long set of stone steps. At the end of the block, a group of boys smoke pot on the corner. JOSHUA passes them and turns down the next empty street.

6. INT. TOWNHOUSE - NIGHT

JOSHUA quietly enters a community townhouse. NOELLIA and DIGNA are sitting in a large open kitchen. DIGNA nurses a glass of wine while Noellia washes dishes. They speak in hushed voices.

NOELLIA

I told him to pack his bags. Three weeks was enough of his crap.

DIGNA

Did you keep his deposit?

NOELLIA

There was no deposit to keep, I never even got it.

DIGNA

Glad he's gone. I'm sorry sweetheart, but I have a child, I'm not about to share my space with a man like that.

They hear him enter.

NOELLIA

Joshua. Hey hun, how was your day?

JOSHUA

It was okay. Sorry, I didn't mean to bother you.

DIGNA

What? This is your house, love, don't be sorry.

JOSHUA

Sorry.

DIGNA

You see? Now he's sorry that he's sorry.

NOELLIA

Do you want something to drink?

JOSHUA

No.

NOELLIA

To eat?

JOSHUA

No, I'm good.

NOELLIA

Okay.

JOSHUA slowly starts to climb the stairs to the second floor.

NOELLIA (CONT'D)

Joshua honey, tomorrow's the fourth. (A pause) Do you have something for me?

JOSHUA

Oh. Yes, that's right. Umm, can I-?

NOELLIA

By Friday.

JOSHUA

Yeah, sure. I'll- I'll have it tomorrow.

He races up the stairs. The two women exchange looks.

JOSHUA sits in his bedroom. It consists solely of a bed, a dresser with a tv on top, a few cluttered boxes and bags, and a bean bag chair. JOSHUA sits on his bed, a clunky PC on his lap. He plays Fortnite.

He repeatedly smashes his fingers against the same two keys back and forth. Over and over again. His eyes glaze over, his mind goes numb.

7. INT. - JOSHUA'S APARTMENT - MORNING

A phone buzzes in a heap of sheets. JOSHUA slowly begins to stir. He rubs his eyes and finds his laptop tucked in next to him. Groggily, he feels around for his phone. He finds it in the sheets and taps the screen to find a very low battery and a missed call & voicemail from Lucia. He listens to the voicemail.

LUCIA V.O.

Hello, Josh, I just wanted to make sure that you got my wake up text. I swear to god you better not still be asleep. Anyway, I'm leaving my place now so I should be by you in about half an hour. Please be up. Okay, love you.

JOSHUA groans then hastily rushes out of bed.

8. INT. CAFE BRUNCH - DAY

JOSHUA sits at a table in a wrinkled t-shirt and hastily tidied hair. Across from him sits LUCIA, 29, a sharply dressed young professional. She sits double fisting a mug of coffee and a strawberry mimosa. She stares at him over a pair of thick colored square glasses in an all too understanding way. LUCIA eats avocado and lox on greens, JOSHUA wolfs down a plate of pancakes.

LUCIA

How're your pancakes, Josh?

JOSHUA

(Chewing) S'good.

LUCIA

Good.

He swallows.

JOSHUA

Thanks.

LUCIA

Are you sure you don't want anything to drink?

JOSHUA
No, I'm fine, just water is good.

LUCIA
Okay, well you look like you could
use some more meat on your bones -
so order whatever.

JOSHUA
Okay-

LUCIA
I'm serious-

JOSHUA
Okay!

LUCIA
Here, I bought something for you.

JOSHUA
What is it?

She hands him a bag full of clothes.

LUCIA
Just something else for you to
wear.

JOSHUA
I don't need any of this-

LUCIA
Yes, you do. Wear them, these are
nice. And for the love of god, get
rid of that shirt, it's so old,
Joshie.

JOSHUA
Mom bought it for me.

LUCIA
Well, then wear it at home, not out
to brunch. For that you can wear
these.

JOSHUA rifles through the bag.

JOSHUA
Salmon shorts and a polo? Do you
want me to get beat up?

LUCIA

Just wear them. There's also an envelope in there.

JOSHUA

Thanks.

He grimaces.

LUCIA

Everything's been absolutely chaotic. Between the heat wave and then that plane falling out of the sky, the hospital's just been...it's a mess. Craig had a patient yesterday that snuck out, stripped down to his underwear, and played in the rain, can you believe it?

JOSHUA

Seriously?

LUCIA

People are just so happy to see the rain again. I know I'm just-relieved. Anyway, all of this leads me to ask, are you still okay being on your own like this?

JOSHUA

Yeah, Luce, I'm fine, and I don't want to move into your guest bedroom.

LUCIA

Are you sure?

JOSHUA

I'm sure. I don't want to intrude on your life with Craig-

LUCIA'S phone rings.

LUCIA

Hold on, I'm so sorry (She answers the phone). What is it, I'm out to lunch. Look Harry you can't be calling me every time this happens, I'm not the one on call. Okay, well call Donovan again and if you can't get through then I'll do it. Okay. Bye. (She hangs up) Sorry.

JOSHUA
No, It's fine-

LUCIA
It's good to see you. They're
treating you well at the townhouse?

JOSHUA
Yes, everyone's been really kind.

LUCIA
And the restaurant?

JOSHUA
Julio is a fantastic manager. You
can tell he cares a lot about the
job and he does really well with
the customers. They all love him.
Actually, he's sort of taken me
under his wing - letting me make
drinks, showing me the ropes. And
all of the servers are really nice,
too. It kind of feels like a close
knit family. I'm happy. I'm really
happy.

9. INT. EMPLOYEE BATHROOM - NIGHT

Joshua is back in the employee bathroom, sweat dripping from his forehead as he mops a vomit-soaked floor. The white fluorescent lighting flickers overhead. There is a loud aggressive knock on the door.

JOSHUA
Yeah?

PATTY V.O.
Josh. Hurry the fuck up in there,
I'm serious. I have 3 tables in A
section that need to be re-set.

JOSHUA
I'm mopping like Julio asked-

PATTY
Whatever. Just hurry.

10. INT. RESTAURANT FLOOR - NIGHT

JOSHUA trudges through the now empty dining room. Chairs are up and the floor is being mopped. He shyly slips past the bar. JULIO whistles at him.

JULIO
Joshua. Hey.

JOSHUA reverses course. JULIO hands him a wad of fives and singles.

JULIO (CONT'D)
Okay, see you tomorrow. Be on time.

JOSHUA
Good work tonight.

JULIO
Huh?

JOSHUA
I said good work tonight.

JULIO raises his eyebrows. JOSHUA leaves.

11. EXT. UPPER MANHATTAN STREET - NIGHT

JOSHUA exits the subway station, climbs the steps and walks down several quiet blocks. He passes the group of neighborhood boys smoking on the corner. They laugh and talk with one another. JOSHUA glances up at them. He sees a BOY with dark skin, slim features, and piercing eyes. JOSHUA catches his gaze momentarily. He quickly breaks eye contact and continues down the street.

12. INT. - FORT TRYON PLACE - NIGHT

JOSHUA fiddles in the kitchen, making a peanut butter and jelly sandwich. He returns the jar of jelly to the fridge and washes the knife. He glances over to the television set in the living room where a little boy with blue hair, OLLIE, violently throttles the controller to a Nintendo Switch. JOSHUA bites into his sandwich, watching as OLLIE drives Bowser straight off the edge of rainbow road. He screeches, sending the controller flying across the room. JOSHUA's face hardens. OLLIE marches over to JOSHUA and takes a seat at the counter.

OLLIE
Did you know that the pronghorn is the second fastest land animal on earth and can run up to 88 kilometers per hour?

JOSHUA
No, I didn't.

OLLIE

And did you know that if you weigh
150 pounds on Earth, you'd weigh 10
pounds on Pluto?

JOSHUA

No, I didn't.

OLLIE

It's because of gravitational pull.

JOSHUA

Mhmm.

OLLIE

You don't know a whole lot, do you?

JOSHUA

What is that supposed to mean?

OLLIE

My mom says that you'd be in school
and not working food service if you
were.

JOSHUA

Don't you have any friends?

OLLIE

Yes. There's my mom, and Noellia,
and Benji, and Marisol, and Mrs.
Vicente-

JOSHUA

No, I mean actual friends. People
your own age, Ollie not adults.

OLLIE

Don't you?

DIGNA V.O.

Ollie, get over here and put on
your pjs!

OLLIE

I don't wanna!

DIGNA V.O.

Ollie, NOW!

OLLIE screeches and smashes his fists against the counter,
then storms off after his mother. JOSHUA winces, just as
NOELLIA rounds the corner.

NOELLIA
You okay sweetheart?

JOSHUA
Yeah.

NOELLIA
I forget what your schedule is, but tomorrow is gardening day. Now that the rain is back.

JOSHUA
Oh, right. Ollie's thing.

NOELLIA
He's so excited. I cleared out the space for a garden back in early march, but...you know.

JOSHUA
Will anything even grow for long this time of year?

NOELLIA
Who knows but we have to try, don't we. It's all part of Ollie's independent study.

JOSHUA
Right.

NOELLIA
3pm. You'll be here?

JOSHUA
Yeah. I'll be here.

13. EXT. UPPER MANHATTAN - DAY

JOSHUA exits the subway and races down the street. Music blasts in his ears. He weaves through the neighborhood, arrives at the base of the long set of stairs, then quickly makes his way to the top. Out of breath, he passes a bodega. The same group of boys chat and laugh on the corner. JOSHUA looks up from his music. He spots the BOY from the night before with the piercing eyes. They make eye contact momentarily. Taken aback, JOSHUA holds his gaze - a moment too long. He looks back at the ground, then starts to trudge away. Halfway down the block he hears a muffled voice. He pulls the headphones out of his ears and turns around to find that the BOY has taken a few steps in his direction. The rest of the group has gone silent, all of them looking at JOSHUA.

JOSHUA
Umm...what?

BOY
I said, you got something to say to
me?

A long pause.

JOSHUA
No.

BOY
Then why you lookin at me?

JOSHUA shifts his body uncomfortably but doesn't say anything. The BOY closes in on him.

BOY (CONT'D)
Then why you lookin at me, huh?

JOSHUA
Dunno, I just-

BOY
Man, you just what-? Boy, I've seen
you coming up this way before,
looking at me like you got
something to say.

The other boys begin to laugh and hiss. They inch their way closer to Joshua, forming a circle around him.

JOSHUA
No, I'm sorry. Accident.

The BOY is now standing right in front of JOSHUA, their faces inches away. He is at least a head taller.

BOY
You some kinda faggot? You think
I'm cute?

The group erupts into laughter. JOSHUA swallows and shakes his head.

BOY (CONT'D)
Whatchu want from me, papi? You
want this dick?

The BOY lewdly grabs his crotch. Another chorus of laughter. He shoves JOSHUA.

BOY 2

Ayo bro, whatever. Just fuck it,
man.

The BOY looks at JOSHUA, sizing him up and down.

BOY

Yeah. Fuck it.

The BOY swings his fist hitting JOSHUA right across the face. He falls sideways into a trash can, gasping for air. JOSHUA recovers and swings his fists wildly. Two of the other boys, much larger than him, swiftly grab him from behind and hold him in place. The BOY punches JOSHUA again in the gut. Once. Twice. Three times. He spits out blood, then cries out.

BOY 2

Ayo Angel, I'm aboutta get this
kid's blood all over my kicks.

BOY

Whatever, drop him.

The BOYS let JOSHUA go. He falls immediately to the ground, out of breath, bloody, and bruised.

BOY (CONT'D)

See you later, faggot.

The boys walk away, leaving JOSHUA bruised and crying.

14. EXT. TOWNHOUSE GARDEN - DAY

JOSHUA scoops out a pile of dirt from the ground. He's on his knees wearing a worn out white t, gardening gloves, and a mini hand shovel. His eye is black and his face is freshly bruised. Stoic and unmoving, he continues to shovel. Behind him, DIGNA and NOELLIA hold trays of plants, watering cans, and boxes of seeds. OLLIE, wielding two hand shovels, pretends to slice the heads off of some of the other tenants. The garden is quite large and secluded. On the far side of the garden sits MRS. VICENTE, an ancient woman in a sunhat, soaking in the shade beneath a large tree. Next to her, her daughter MARISOL who watches Ollie with distaste, and BENJI, a young bearded man who quietly matches seeds with pots.

NOELLIA

Ollie, honey, come take these pots
and bring them to Joshua.

OLLIE

No!

DIGNA

Ollie, this is not playtime, this is class time, remember? Stop playing Star Wars.

OLLIE

But I'm killing Count Dooku!

OLLIE holds the two shovels together, one over the other and pulls, cleanly slicing the head off a sunflower.

NOELLIA

Ollie, what are you doing!? Those are the last of the originals!

DIGNA

Ollie, get over here! Now!

OLLIE screeches, sending both of the shovels flying. In the background, MRS. VICENTE and MARISOL give each other dark looks.

MRS. VICENT

!Aye dios mio, ese nino necessita una chancletta en la cabeza, coño!

NOELLIA

Here, Joshua, can you take these please, hon?

JOSHUA takes the tray of pots from NOELLIA.

NOELLIA (CONT'D)

Oh, crap, is that all the soil we have?

JOSHUA

Yeah, that's it.

NOELLIA

How did we go through that so fast? Sweetheart, can you do me a huge favor? There's another big bag just like this one, but it's all the way upstairs in the attic.

JOSHUA

Sure, I can get it.

NOELLIA

(remembering his bruises)
Actually, never mind. Benji can get it, I don't want you-

JOSHUA
No, it's fine. I promise.

NOELLIA
Thank you, love. You're such a
sweet boy.

NOELLIA leans over and gently runs a finger across his face,
giving him a soft wink.

NOELLIA (CONT'D)
Whatever you need, you tell me.

JOSHUA gets up and exits the garden.

OLLIE
Mommy, why is Joshua all black and
blue?

DIGNA
Because some boys are mean and
don't have empathy. Do you remember
when we reviewed empathy?

15. INT. TOWNHOUSE ATTIC - DAY

A sliver of light floods the darkened room as the hatch in the floor opens. JOSHUA climbs the steps into frame, sending dust everywhere. He fiddles with a light switch sending an oversaturated hue throughout the room. JOSHUA gingerly limps through the space, eyeing boxes, shelves, and old stacks of magazines. He finds a big bag of soil standing on top of a dusty trunk. He lifts it and as he turns, his foot kicks the trunk which flies open out of frame. JOSHUA freezes, turns around, and spots the open trunk. He lets the soil fall to the ground. He inches closer to the trunk to see what's inside. The folded body of a boy sits in the trunk. JOSHUA gasps and flinches before quickly realizing that the figure is in fact a ventriloquist dummy. He slowly gets to his knees in front of the doll and gently runs a hand over its dust covered face. The doll is at least several decades old and its face is matted with dust and grease. Blond hair and blue eyes, it stares up at JOSHUA with a smile. JOSHUA stares back.

16. EXT. TOWNHOUSE GARDEN - DAY

OLLIE, face still red from a tantrum now happily digs a hole in the earth with his hand shovel. BENJI kneels beside him checking his work. DIGNA and NOELLIA stand a few feet away talking in hushed voices. JOSHUA enters through the screen door carrying the old trunk. NOELLIA looks up.

NOELLIA
Did you find it?

JOSHUA
Yes, but I also found this!

OLLIE
What the hell is that?

NOELLIA
Ollie, don't say hell.

DIGNA
Niño, you're not moving out, are you?

NOELLIA
No, that's my father's trunk. I think that's where I put-

JOSHUA opens the case, revealing the doll. Everyone gasps and exclaims with interest.

DIGNA
Oh my goodness, where did you find that?

JOSHUA
It was right there in the attic.

NOELLIA
I haven't seen that in years! A client gave it to my father, way back when I was a girl. I don't think that thing has seen much air.

OLLIE
It's creepy. Put it away.

NOELLIA
No, hon, it's not creepy. It's a ventriloquist doll, see?

She picks the doll up out of the trunk and begins to dust it off.

NOELLIA (CONT'D)
You put your hand through the bottom and you can give him a voice and a name and a life. Isn't that cool?

OLLIE
I want it!

DIGNA

No, Sugar, that's not yours to take, that's Noellia's.

OLLIE

Miss Noellia, can I have it?

NOELLIA

(A pause) Well, you know, Joshua did find it. Do you want to keep him, sweetheart?

JOSHUA

Huh? Really?

NOELLIA

Yes, you're the one that saved him from that trunk, so you should have him.

JULIO

I- yeah, sure. Okay. Thanks!

OLLIE

Noooooo-!

DIGNA

No no Ollie, that isn't for you.

OLLIE

But I want-

DIGNA

That isn't for you. Enough.

OLLIE screeches and runs over towards MRS. VICENTE who makes no attempt to hide her sour expression. JOSHUA looks down at the doll as the group dissipates. His face now a bright shade of purple, he smiles.

17. INT. BATHROOM - NIGHT

JOSHA is on all fours, shirtless and wearing a pair of boxer briefs. He leans over the side of the tub, his body moving rhythmically. A closeup shot reveals his bruised face focused and hard at work. In the tub sits the doll, almost entirely submerged in soapy water. On the side of the tub, the doll's now clean clothes are laid out to dry. JOSHUA scrubs.

18. INT. BEDROOM - NIGHT

JOSHUA paces the length of his room. He is now showered, his wounds are tended to, and he wears pajamas. He walks back and forth with a manic glow. In front of him, nestled in the bean bag chair, sits the doll. His face is now vibrant, his smile is angelic, and his red plaid shirt offsets the bright blue of his eyes. The doll stares back at JOSHUA, smiling.

JOSHUA

You know, I've never really been all that great at talking to people. Some people can be really nice. But lately...I'm not so sure what they have to offer. And- And while I was never personally stuffed inside a trunk for thirty years, I feel like a lot of people would like to shove me into a confined space and forget about me for a long time if they could. Oh. I'm Joshua, by the way. People call me Joshua. But you- you can call me Josh...if you like. What's your name?

The doll stares at JOSHUA.

JOSHUA (CONT'D)

Uhh, right. We'll try this a different way then.

JOSHUA lifts the doll off the bean bag chair. He pulls a stool out of the corner of the room, sits down, and sets the doll on his lap. They stare at one another. JOSHUA awkwardly shifts the doll's weight back and forth, easing into a comfortable position.

JOSHUA (CONT'D)

There we go. That's- that's much better. I'm just gonna put my hand in you like this (he slides his hand up into the dummy). Great! How's that?

JOSHUA moves his hand. Slowly, the dummy comes to life.

JOSHUA (CONT'D)

Is- is that okay?

The doll nods.

JOSHUA (CONT'D)

Cool. Umm, anyway, as I was saying before, my name is Joshua. But you can call me Josh. And I don't usually have a ton of people to talk to. And I was thinking that if you wanted to, we could be friends. How does that sound?

The doll nods.

JOSHUA (CONT'D)

Awesome! So uh, what's your name?

There is a long pause. In a soft, throaty voice, the doll, voiced by JOSHUA responds.

MAX

Max.

JOSHUA

Hi, Max! You're pretty cool for a doll...not that I play with dolls. I mean I had action figures growing up, and a Build-a-Bear named Rex, but- but nothing like you. My sister had all the dolls but she had outgrown them by the time I was a kid. She's older, you see. I was born to save the marriage, but I couldn't even do that right. Do you have a family?

A long pause. MAX stares.

19. INT. KITCHEN - MORNING

JOSHUA rummages through the cabinets for a box of cereal. He pours himself a giant bowl and fills it to the brim with milk. MAX sits on the kitchen stool opposite him, smiling. As he prepares breakfast, JOSHUA talks to MAX.

JOSHUA

So if we're going to live together, there are a few things you should know about me. I work at a restaurant and my favorite food is peanut butter & jelly. My favorite *breakfast* food is cereal. Noellia usually gets the groceries and we all give her a few bucks a month.

(MORE)

JOSHUA (CONT'D)

I guess you don't have to since you won't be eating much, but don't think you're gonna sit here and freeload. You may have successfully squatted in the attic for thirty plus years but starting today, you're going to need to contribute. I'm talking about washing dishes, taking out the garbage, and yes, even helping Ollie with his projects.

A pause. MAX stares.

JOSHUA (CONT'D)

I know what you're thinking, he's a handsy little shit that needs to be drop-kicked and taught a lesson, I agree with you. But, as Noellia says, *it takes a village*, and when you live here you agree to be an active member of the family. And Lucia says that community is good for me- at least until I go back to school again. You clean up real well, by the way. Lucky I found you and rescued you from that trunk. If Ollie had found you he'd have probably stuck you in the oven...or covered you with paint. But no, not me. I'm gonna take care of you. It looks like we both got lucky, didn't we.

MAX stares.

20. INT. RESTAURANT FLOOR - EVENING

JOSHUA enters the restaurant wearing a hoodie and a backpack. The hood is up to cover his face. The bell dings, JULIO looks up from bar prep as JOSHUA makes his way to the back. He whistles.

JULIO

Hey, Joshua!

Joshua stops, shifts his body ever so slightly towards JULIO.

JULIO (CONT'D)

What's going on, let me see your face?

JOSHUA pulls the hood down, revealing his bruised face.

JULIO (CONT'D)
What the hell-? Joshua. Are you
really about to come in here
looking like this?

JOSHUA
I'm sorry.

JULIO
Well. What happened?

JOSHUA
I got beat up. These guys on my
block.

There is a long pause. JULIO sighs, frowning his brow.

JULIO
Dammit, Joshua. I can't put you on
the floor looking like this, people
will think I'm running Mexican
fight club in the back, I- (a
pause). Are you okay?

JOSHUA nods.

JULIO (CONT'D)
Do you want to go home?

JOSHUA
No, please. I need the money.

JULIO
Okay, well...just- just take it
easy tonight then. Stay in the
back, let Tina do all of the
hosting.

JOSHUA
Okay.

JOSHUA walks to the back of the restaurant. JULIO watches,
shaking his head.

21. INT. RESTAURANT FLOOR - NIGHT

JOSHUA stands at attention in his white shirt and slacks. Positioned at the rear of the restaurant, he watches the activity on the floor in shadow. He eyes a family of four eating dinner a few tables away. Mom, dad, daughter, and son. He watches the son, a young man of 19 or 20 as he eats a bowl of paella.

He's young and babyfaced, his dimples still pronounced, yet he carries with him the maturity of adulthood. The boy laughs at a joke his father tells. He seems to glow in his red plaid shirt. JOSHUA moves around the room, silently lifting empty cups and plates off of tables. He passes the table with the family of four. The young man draws his eye for the briefest of moments. He grins at JOSHUA who turns red.

MOM

Excuse me, can you take this?

A plate with utensils is thrust in his hands. He nods and moves to toss it in the bin. The night bustles on. JOSHUA refills water, scrapes off plates and resets silverware. JULIO eyes him at a distance. JOSHUA looks back at the table where the family of four sat. It's now empty.

22. INT. BEDROOM - NIGHT

JOSHUA sits criss-cross on his bed eating a pb&j. He plays video games. MAX is seated on the bean bag chair watching. JOSHUA glances at the doll, then smiles.

JOSHUA is fast asleep. MAX is lying next to him.

JOSHUA dreams that he is running through Ft. Tryon Park. The path twists and turns. Voices echo behind him. JOSHUA runs down a set of steep stone steps. He sees a tall stone tunnel and races towards it. The voices grow louder as the tunnel looms closer. JOSHUA runs through it. Suddenly, he is surrounded. Unknown hands throw him to the ground. A shoe connects with his gut, then another. On a park bench, MAX watches, his smile unfaltering. JOSHUA gasps, reaching out to MAX. There is a loud snapping noise and out of the trees a figure emerges. The sounds of hands meeting flesh, then flesh meeting concrete. JOSHUA cries as soft hands envelop him. He weeps. When he looks up, he sees a middle aged woman, then Lucia, until finally, he sees the boy from the restaurant. JOSHUA grips the boy tightly. In bed, we see JOSHUA holding onto the doll. On the cold hard stone floor, the boy and JOSHUA continue to embrace.

JOSHUA

Max...Max...

From the bench, MAX watches.