

INT. HALLWAY - MORNING

ELIJAH, a rather scrawny 8-year-old boy is walking in a hallway.

The hardwood floor creaks slightly; he pauses. A faint sound of A WOMAN sobbing can be overheard. He continues and stops as he reaches the door at the end of the hallway. He turns the doorknob very slowly.

The sobbing becomes louder as the door opens.

His mother, LAURA is sitting on the edge of the bed crying. She is an attractive 35-year-old woman, but her sadness has aged her. She does not notice Elijah. She wipes her tears.

Elijah closes the door quietly.

FADE TO BLACK.

TITLE: BY THE HAND

FADE IN:

INT. APARTMENT/KITCHEN - MORNING

Elijah is sitting at the kitchen table staring down blankly at his untouched bowl of cereal. He slowly separates his Cheerios with the help of his spoon.

Laura walks in the kitchen still in her robe. Her eyes are still swollen from the crying. Elijah observes her as she takes some aspirin. He pushes his bowl away. Laura pushes it back in front of him. Elijah defiantly pushes it away again. Laura pushes it back, this time more violently causing some milk to overflow.

Elijah reluctantly takes a spoonful of cereal.

LAURA
Shit, your lunch...

She quickly makes a peanut butter and jelly sandwich. Elijah watches her in silence as he eats his cereal. She puts the sandwich in a brown paper bag and puts it in Elijah's school bag. She hands it to him. Elijah takes the bag from her and walks out of the kitchen. Laura sighs as she attempts to alleviate her headache by pressing her fingers between her eyebrows.

EXT. 5TH AVE & CENTRAL PARK - MORNING

Elijah exits the building. He crosses the street towards Central Park. He stares into the park as he walks. The SOUND of the TRAFFIC fades around him as the SOUNDS of the PARK become clearer. Elijah is not looking where he's going.

WOMAN'S VOICE (O.S)
Careful, kid.

Elijah does not hear her on time. His daydreaming is interrupted as he bumps into a small table and knocks it over. MALAIKA, an African American homeless woman in her mid 60's, who is sitting on one of the benches, stands up and picks up the table. All these little figurines made out of wire are scattered on the ground. Elijah is paralyzed out of embarrassment.

Malaika looks at him and smiles.

MALAIKA
(warmly)
An old woman like myself could use
a little help.

Elijah bends down and picks up some of the figurines. Malaika sits back down and places them on the table. Elijah lays them down carefully next to the other ones on the table. Malaika observes him as he inspects the last figurine. It is of a child holding a balloon.

MALAIKA (CONT'D)
Don't worry, I'll take care of the
rest.

Elijah quickly places the last figurine on the table. He smiles slightly before starting to walk away.

MALAIKA (CONT'D)
See you soon, kiddo.

Malaika watches him walk away.

INT. APARTMENT - DAY

Elijah walks in the front door and finds his Mom packing some boxes in the living room. She is deep in her thoughts as she is looking at a picture.

ELIJAH
Hi.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

LAURA
(startled)
God, Elijah!

She drops the picture.

ELIJAH
Sorry.

LAURA
It's OK.

He puts down his school bag on the floor and sits down next to his Mom.

LAURA (CONT'D)
How was school?

ELIJAH
Fine.

Elijah picks up the picture Laura was looking at. It is a picture of what we guess is his father. He stares at it. Laura notices and takes the picture out of his hands and puts it in the box in front of her.

Elijah frowns. He looks inside the box and sees it is filled with memorabilia of his father: pictures, clothes, objects. Laura approaches her hand as if to comfort Elijah, but then decides to push the box away instead. Elijah looks up at her questioningly.

LAURA
(with a shaky voice)
Do me a favor and go do some homework.

Elijah doesn't move.

LAURA (CONT'D)
Please!

Elijah stands up, grabs his backpack and walks out of the room. Laura stares into space. A door slams.

INT. ELIJAH'S BEDROOM - NIGHT

Elijah is sitting on his bed under the covers. He is watching a home video of him and his father.

EXT. 5TH AVE & CENTRAL PARK - MORNING

Elijah is walking along the park. He sees Malaika from far and slows down. She looks at him and waves. This prompts him to continue walking towards her.

MALAIKA
Well, hello there, kiddo!

ELIJAH
(softly)
Hi.

Elijah stares down at her figurines.

MALAIKA
Pick one.

Elijah looks up at her hesitantly.

MALAIKA (CONT'D)
Go on. Pick any one.

ELIJAH
I don't have any money...

MALAIKA
Money is not the only currency in
the world.

Elijah doesn't understand what she means. Malaika chuckles. She picks up the figurine of the child with the balloon and gives it to Elijah. He smiles.

MALAIKA (CONT'D)
There, that's all I need. A smile.

ELIJAH
Thank you.

MALAIKA
You're very welcome.
(beat)
What's your name?

ELIJAH
Elijah.

MALAIKA
I'm Malaika. Pleasure meeting you
Elijah.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

ELIJAH
I have to go to school.

MALAIKA
See you tomorrow?

Elijah nods.

ELIJAH
Bye.

Elijah walks away looking down at the figurine.

INT. KITCHEN - NIGHT

Elijah is sitting at the kitchen table observing his mother prepare macaroni and cheese. The table is set for one person. Laura pours herself a glass of wine.

Elijah is thoughtful.

ELIJAH
Mom?

LAURA
(without turning around)
Mm hmm?

ELIJAH
How do people become homeless?

Laura turns around, frowning.

LAURA
Well, I don't know, for many
different reasons.

Elijah does not seem satisfied with the response.

LAURA (CONT'D)
Why do you ask?

ELIJAH
Just wondering...

Laura looks at him skeptically before going back to the macaroni and cheese. She puts a helping on a plate and places it in front of Elijah. She sits down in front of him.

ELIJAH (CONT'D)
You're not eating?

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

LAURA
I'm not hungry.

Beat.

ELIJAH
(hesitantly)
Because of Dad?

Laura winces.

LAURA
(her throat tightening)
I'll eat later.

Elijah starts eating his dinner as Laura continues sipping her wine.

INT. KITCHEN - MORNING

Elijah enters the kitchen and heads for the fridge. He takes out ingredients to make a peanut butter sandwich. A full lunch bag is already on the counter top. He looks inside and takes out the contents: a wrapped sandwich, an apple and a small bag with sliced carrots inside. He opens the wrapper of the sandwich and smells it. He scrunches his nose and puts the contents back inside the brown paper bag. He starts making a peanut butter sandwich when Laura walks in. She is dressed to go to work.

LAURA
(stressed)
Hey.

Laura pours herself a small cup of coffee. Elijah wraps up his sandwich in some tin foil. Laura watches him, perplexed as she finishes her coffee.

LAURA (CONT'D)
I have to go. Don't be late for school!

Laura gives him a quick kiss on the head before walking out of the kitchen. Elijah gets some cookies from one of the kitchen cabinets and adds them and the sandwich to the lunch bag.

EXT. 5TH AVE & CENTRAL PARK - MORNING

Elijah walks out of the apartment building with a hint of a smile on his face. He walks at a faster pace than usual.

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For the complete script please contact Jennifer Brooks at
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