



written + directed  
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*Inspired by the poem  
"Cross"  
by Langston Hughes*

You look at  
everything,  
I regret to say,  
in terms of  
black and white.

**INT. MOTEL ROOM. NIGHT**

Dark; low-rent. Moonlight spills through the slatted blinds, casting the narrow room in hard, sharp shadows.

Slouched at the edge of the twin bed is LEVI (white - 40s). Unkempt, gruff, blue-collar. Clutching a bottle of vodka.

He puts the bottle to his lips and drinks.

MAX (V.O.)  
*My old man's a white old man...*

**LATER**

Shitfaced -- shirtless -- Levi studies himself in the mirror.

**EXT. STOOP. DAY**

Run-down neighborhood. CHILDREN chase each other and rejoice under the jets of a lawn sprinkler.

Sitting on one of the stoops -- cigarillo dangling from her lips -- quickly braiding hair -- is ELLIE (Black - 30s).

MAX (V.O.)  
*... And my old mother's Black.*

Ellie is playfully coerced into jumping double-dutch.

**INT. SUBURBAN HOUSE. NIGHT**

Large; hollow. Standing lamps illuminate the emptiness.

**SERIES OF SHOTS :: PUNISHMENT MONTAGE**

\* Levi and Ellie have a heated debate, their shadows clashing against the wall.

\* All the while, their son, MAX (mixed - 13), watches.

\* Levi catches Max spying.

\* He grabs Max -- SLAPS him across the face.

\* Ellie smokes her cigarillo. Turns away.

\* Max stands in the corner, facing the wall. Fists clenched.

MAX (V.O.)  
*If ever I cursed my white old man...*

**INT. SUBURBAN HOUSE. MAX'S ROOM. NIGHT**

Darkness.

The door opens. Levi's silhouette towers in the frame.

He kneels next to Max's bed -- silently consoles his son.

MAX (V.O.)  
*... I take my curses back.*

**INT. SUBURBAN HOUSE. SUNROOM. SUNSET**

Ellie's silhouette. Smoke billows from the glowing tip of her cigarillo.

MAX (V.O.)  
*If ever I cursed my Black old  
mother...*

She carefully turns her head.

MAX (V.O.)  
*... And wished she were in Hell...*

**INT. SUBURBAN HOUSE. MAX'S ROOM. NIGHT**

Max in bed. Eyes closed. Lips murmuring whispered prayers.

MAX (V.O.)  
*... I'm sorry for that evil wish...*

**INT. CHURCH. MORNING**

A lively congregation clapping and swaying to the sounds of a gospel choir. In the crowd, the camera finds

ELLIE,

fanning herself with a prayer card.

**LATER**

The PASTOR gently lays hands on Ellie's head.

MAX (V.O.)  
*... And now I wish her well.*

*INSERT SHOT: Quick cuts of Ellie smirking, smiling, laughing.*

DISSOLVE TO:

**INT. SUBURBAN HOUSE. LIVING ROOM. DAY**

Years later.

Levi is propped up in a hospital bed -- his eyes wavering -- a thin tube tethered beneath his nostrils -- his frail body wilting beneath the thin blankets.

Max, now in his thirties, sits solemnly at Levi's bedside.

MAX (V.O.)  
*My old man died in a fine big  
house...*

Levi reaches out for his son.

WIDER. Max slowly takes his father's hand.

**INT. DECREPIT HOUSE. EVENING**

Filthy; sparsely furnished. Ellie appears from the shadows. Older, battered, alone. She flicks a small plastic baggie half-filled with white powder. Stumbles down the hallway.

MAX (V.O.)  
*My ma died in a shack.*

**EXT. CEMETERY. DAY**

ON MAX

Standing over a pair of tombstones.

MAX (V.O.)  
*I wonder where I'm gonna die...*

WIDER. A frigid wind whips through the desolate cemetery--

CUT TO:

**EMPTY FRAME**

Max stands in the void, his face half-cloaked in shadow. He looks directly into the camera.

MAX (V.O.)  
*... Being neither white nor Black.*

Hold.

FADE OUT.