

MULATTO WITH A HARD R

Written by

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INT. MIDDLE SCHOOL CLASSROOM - AFTERNOON

The room is dimly lit. All that can be seen is THE MONOLOGUIST, 20+, sitting at a desk, lit by spotlight.

MONOLOGUIST

I grew up in a white place. Most my life I've lived in white places. When I got to my second elementary school there were two people of color. Me and my sister. I didn't really fit in for the first couple years. Everyone thought I was weird and when I stopped being weird to them I was a commodity, whatever I was though I was Black.

My dad was Nigerian, and my mum was Colombian and White. Before the American Public School system got it's ever over-simplifying hands around me I was a lil mulatto. Y'know? My booty shook to the beats of Celia Cruz and Fela Kuti, for the first few years of my life I shit nothing but yams and cilantro. I'd never really been black before.

But The People they said I was black and so I committed-as best I could. In Buttfuck, Iowa that just meant finding whatever bits of black cinema the local video store had and then treating them like cultural texts. I was 16 years old before I found out Pootie Tang was directed by Louis C.K.

The light flicks on, normal classroom lighting. The Monologist reaches into a backpack, pulls out a notebook, and begins drawing S's (you know the ones).

The TEACHER sits at her desk, rifling through essays. She pulls one out of the pile.

TEACHER

Black?

MULATTO/BLACK, 12, mocha caramel skin, black painted face walks up.

MULATTO/BLACK

Teacher?

TEACHER
Mrs. Teacher.

MULATTO/BLACK
Sorry.

TEACHER
It's okay. There are some problems
with your short story.

Mulatto/Black is disappointed.

TEACHER (CONT'D)
You said the car had hydraulics.

He smiles.

MULATTO/BLACK
Yeahhh like in Soul Plane.

TEACHER
Cars don't have hydraulics.

MULATTO/BLACK
The cool ones do--

TEACHER
Hydraulics are for farm equipment.
Like tractors.

MULATTO/
Nah nah, you got it all wrong. It's
like--

Mulatto/Black awkwardly mimes bumping while Teacher stares,
confused.

MULATTO/BLACK
You know, the car Pops and Bounces
and stuff.

TEACHER
Take it out Black.

She writes a B, B- on his paper and hands it to him. Mulatto
walks back to his seat, next to two girls, HER and SHE. Next
to the mention of hydraulics scrawled in red is "Not a thing,
rewrite". Mulatto/Black starts to scribble an unflattering
caricature of the teacher, and turns her suggestion to a
speech bubble.

MONOLOGUIST

The thing about working to be black in a white place is-it's not really all that much work. You watch one season of Chappelle's Show, have one drop of melanin and you're there. They'll buy it completely. And now you're It. You're white America's bridge to a culture that you don't entirely understand yet yourself. Before you know enough to say "With all due respect-fuck right off" your hair's getting felt up because there's something orgasmic about a curl. And wow! It's a marvel that YOU can tan too. And how come--

The Monologist is interrupted by the two girls giggling. As they do, they look to Mulatto/Black intermittently, and Mulatto/Black takes notice. Mulatto/Black watches confusedly as the two jabber.

HER

Shut UP! You Can't ask that.

SHE

Why can't I?

HER

Because it's not polite. And its Gross.

SHE

Well I want to know.

MULATTO/BLACK

What's up?

Now She's embarrassed.

SHE

(smiling uncomfortably)
Nothing.

HER

(now enjoying herself)
She had a question. About black people. About black guys.

SHE

Shut UP. Black it's nothing.

MULATTO/BLACK

Oh okay I get it.
 (inflatedly; middle school
 bravado)
 Yeahh. Black guys have big dicks.

She blurts out the real question.

SHE

Do black people have black cum?

MONOLOGUIST

These people they did not get me. I swear you had to put in actual work to be that dumb. A lil bit of stupid never hurt anybody-

CUT TO:

INT. CAR - 3:00 AM

The car shuttles down the road, in the background Mulatto sleeps, DAD drives. Over the course of the monologue, we move from the dead of night to early morning.

MONOLOGUIST

But the first time I was called a nigger, I knew I wasn't to be called that. I'd never been told, but I'd heard it in movies I'd read it in books and I knew that a grown man, he uh- he owned the farmland next to us, he was not to say that to my father, my sister, or to 9 year old me.

Years later in high school this one kid loved the word nigger quite a bit. The first time he called me a nigger I don't think I said much of anything. The next time he called me a nigger I called him a "cousin fucker" We both got sent to the office, and my principal he looked so scared. More scared than either of us. I said we were just fucking around.

One day that kid and a friend of his, big fucking dude, like 6 foot, 3 hundred pounds, they told me they'd love to hang me from his cherry tree. "Nig nog!

(MORE)

MONOLOGUIST (CONT'D)

Imma hang you from my cherry tree!"
an I was mad. Like I seent red mad.
I told them say that shit again so
I could beat his fuckin ass. The
locker room was quiet, and he and
his big ass friend- I woulda lost
the fuck out of that fight- they
walked off.

I saw the kid in the hall the next
day, and I thought there'd be a
refractory period of some sort but
nah he spit that shit out just the
same and he looked at me with
malice in his little eyes and-
"Nigger"

I wasn't really pissed like before
but I sorta shouldered him anyway.
He was real tiny like a buck twenty
soaking wet if that. And I
shouldn't have been happy about it
but I was like *glowing*. That shit
made my day.

That night I was in bed, I lived
out in the country so it was quiet
at night, dark too, like legitimate
darkness, India Ink Black. When the
stars are there and the moon's out
and full things are beautiful and
it's comforting.

It was not a full moon and my bed
was against the wall, I was too,
and I heard someone pull up on the
gravel and there was yelling.

Punk Nigger. Fucking Nigger. We're
gonna hang us a Nigger. I don't
think a Cherry tree ever got
mentioned. My family didn't keep
guns like most people in the
country. The word nigger meant a
lot to me right then.

After that I hated the word Nigger.
I fucking despised it and I let
everyone know.

(MORE)

MONOLOGUIST (CONT'D)

For a bit, I was this itsy bitsy,
teenie weenie, mocha caramel,
little social justice warrior and I
didn't care if you were singing it,
reading Huckleberry Finn out loud
or whatever. I hated it.

The first time I got called nigga,
no um, no hard R or anything I-

The car stops. Dad's hand reaches and wakes the drooling
Mulatto by hitting him in the chest with the back of his
hand.

MULATTO

What? Oh-uhh yeah, I'll see you
Sunday Dad.

EXT. MOM'S HOUSE - MORNING

Mulatto gets out of the car and walks into the arms of MOM,
(35), white passing-1/2 Colombian for the record.

MOM

Ah! It's so good to see you, how
was the car ride?

MULATTO

Alright? I guess. I slept.

INT. MOM'S HOUSE - CONTINUOUS

MOM

The whole way?
(he nods)
Good. You're rested then. D'you
remember Bonafide from when you
visited my class?

MULATTO

Bonafide.

MOM

BONAFIDE BLACK. You guys got along
really well. You did that picture
together.

MULATTO

Is it maybe weird that I hang out
with your students?

MOM

I don't see why it would be.
Besides, his Mom needs someone to
watch him today.

MULATTO

I'm a babysitter?

MOM

That's ridiculous. I'm babysitting.
You two are playing.

A KNOCK. They go to open the door. At their eye level, the
mothers hug. BONAFIDE'S MOM is African American, a younger
mom.

The moms speak in the background.

MULATTO

Hey what's up?

BONAFIDE BLACK

Not much bruh what's good with you?

WHAM. Mulatto is struck and now sports a white face.

MULATTO/WHITE

I dunno, that is a good question
man.

BONAFIDE'S MOM

Y'all go play.

INT. MULATTO/WHITE'S ROOM - LATER

Bonafide Black surveys the room.

BONAFIDE BLACK

So White you got a Xbox?

MULATTO/WHITE

No my mom Her thinks that video
games are like-bad for you. TV too.

BONAFIDE BLACK

You gotta ball somewhere then?

MULATTO/WHITE

I dunno I mostly just like-read
Calvin and Hobbes and draw and
stuff.

BONAFIDE BLACK

Those not really two person
activities. Unless I'm finna draw
you, readin Calvin and Hobbes-

Mulatto/White looks hopeful.

BONAFIDE BLACK (CONT'D)

That shit sound sorta gay tho.

MULATTO/WHITE

(not quite right)

Oh yeah fushure.

Beat.

BONAFIDE BLACK

Tell you what. I got my PSP. I got
some games on there, imma play a
bit and you can draw or some shit.
And when you play I'll find
somethin to do.

MULATTO/WHITE

Aight yeah! Sounds cool.

The boys sit down on Mulatto/White's bed and Bonafide Black
pulls the PSP from his pocket, and hands it to him, then
starts to take out his games.

MULATTO/WHITE (CONT'D)

I'm going first?

BONAFIDE BLACK

Yeah. I mean you my nigga right?
That's like hospitality and shit.

Mulatto is stunned.

MONOLOGUIST

The first time I got called nigga I
um-I smiled.

(beat)

The hard R makes all the
difference.

The little brown boy works to hide a smile. The Monologist
doesn't.