

# **A Long Line of Addicts**

by Malika Ali

FADE IN:

INT. CRENSHAW HILLS - LIVING ROOM - DAY

RASHEEDA WASHINGTON sits cross-legged on a gilded antique sofa. An old photo albums rest at her side.

RASHEEDA (V.O.)  
(pointing at picture)  
This is me. I was 18 years old.

We zoom in on a portrait of a fresh faced college student circa early 1990's. She wears dookie braids that dangle to her waist.

RASHEEDA (V.O.)  
I went to this college.

We see a photo of a red brick building erected in 1867. Its clock tower ticks.

RASHEEDA (V.O.)  
I went home for the holiday. It was December. I had sex with my high school sweetheart.

INT. MIDWESTERN FAMILY ROOM - DAY

18-YEAR-OLD-RASHEEDA and a HEART THROB make out on the edge of a couch.

RASHEEDA (V.O.)  
I hate him now.

INT. CRENSHAW HILLS - LIVING ROOM - DAY

Rasheeda turns the album's page.

RASHEEDA (V.O.)  
This is the son we had.

Photo of a fat baby boy.

RASHEEDA (V.O.)  
He weighed a lot at birth.

EXT. CITY PARK - DAY

18-Year-Old Rasheeda strolls with her INFANT in the park. A WHITE COUPLE stops and looks.

RASHEEDA (V.O.)  
Caucasian strangers said he would  
become a football player. I thought  
that was some racist shit.

INT. CHINESE RESTAURANT - DAY

18-Year-Old Rasheeda stands admiring her child at the take-out register.

RASHEEDA (V.O.)  
My son had very big eyes. Bright,  
hopeful eyes. Asian people got a kick  
out of that.

The CANTONESE OWNER waves for his KITCHEN STAFF to have a look.

CANTONESE OWNER  
Look! Eyes!

RASHEEDA (V.O.)  
I wish his eyes were as bright as they  
used to be. They have that I-stay-high  
slant now.

INT. CRENSHAW HILLS - DAY

Rasheeda turns the album's page.

RASHEEDA (V.O.)  
See, he's high here at 13, here at 15,  
and here again at 16. I didn't know it  
then. I thought it was just his new  
teenage face.

Rasheeda's husband, RYAN, walks into the room. He is hefty from his vegetarian diet of French fries and pasta.

RASHEEDA  
Just figured out how to begin my new  
script.

She shows him her pages. He reads them aloud.

RYAN  
(reading aloud)  
Rasheeda's husband walks in the room.  
He is hefty from his vegetarian diet of  
French fries and pasta.

Ryan tucks his gut.

RYAN  
What is this?

RASHEEDA  
Family trouble - fodder for my script.

She takes her computer. Ryan stands awkwardly.

RASHEEDA  
What did you want?

RYAN  
Have you seen my socks?

RASHEEDA (V.O.)  
This is not 1950.

The picture becomes "colorized." Rasheeda and Rye wear vintage Americana apparel.

INT. CRENSHAW HILLS - FRONT DOOR - DAY

Rasheeda kisses Ryan and his briefcase goodbye.

RASHEEDA (V.O.)  
However, my husband earns a living and  
I do not.

INT. CRENSHAW HILLS - KITCHEN - DAY

Rasheeda places a steaming pot on the stove.

RASHEEDA (V.O.)  
I cook.

INT. CRENSHAW HILLS - DINING ROOM - DAY

Rasheeda, with feather duster in hand and Infant strapped to her back, dusts the room.

RASHEEDA (V.O.)  
I clean. I rear the kids.

Rasheeda passes the baby to Ryan.

RASHEEDA (V.O.)  
He rears too, 'cause like I said, it's  
not 1950. Oh, I also write screenplays.

INT. CRENSHAW HILLS - LIVING ROOM - DAY

Rasheeda puts brass brads in the top and bottom holes of a thick script.

RASHEEDA (V.O.)

My scripts do not win contests. They  
don't get me into prestigious  
screenwriting labs. My short films have  
never gone to festival.

Rasheeda puts the photo album down and picks up a glossy trade magazine.

RASHEEDA (V.O.)

I have friends. Successful friends.

She leafs through the magazine and lands on a Euro-type posing.

RASHEEDA (V.O.)

There is Donnie. He is French.

EXT. BUS BENCH - DAY

A five-hundred-dollar Honda Civic sits smoking on the road.

Rasheeda and Zaire wait on a bus bench decorated with a poster of a zombie girl.

RASHEEDA (V.O.)

Donnie made a horror film. His posters  
are all over the city.

Zaire stares at the zombie girl poster. He stares at the smoking Honda Civic. He stares at his mom.

ZAIRE

You jealous?

RASHEEDA (V.O.)

I don't answer, but the answer is yes.  
I am jealous.

EXT. LA STREET - DAY

Rasheeda walks across a mural of Donnie's zombie girl movie. She stops to answer her phone.

RASHEEDA (V.O.)  
Donnie calls me up the day his latest  
project is bought my a mini-major. The  
news makes The Hollywood Reporter. He  
asks me to join him for dinner.

INT. THAI RESTAURANT - NIGHT

Rasheeda and DONNIE, French, twirl flat noodles over a plate.

RASHEEDA  
Shouldn't you be at an industry party  
somewhere celebrating?

Donnie laughs.

RASHEEDA (V.O.)  
I know nothing. I am not an insider.  
And this dinner is a pity party  
Donnie's hosting on my behalf, though I  
didn't know that yet either.

INT. CRENSHAW HILLS - ZAIRE'S BEDROOM - DAY

Rasheeda vacuums. She finds a straw on the floor and trashes it.

RASHEEDA (V.O.)  
This is how I came to know these  
things.

An image of a feisty red headed senior pops on screen.

RASHEEDA (V.O.)  
My old college professor was coming to  
stay in our home.

Rasheeda dusts. She finds another straw.

RASHEEDA (V.O.)  
We were setting her up in Zaire's room.

Rasheeda flips Zaire's mattress. She takes a closer look - ten  
more straws. She is perplexed.

She opens his closet and goes through his stuff. She picks up a  
box with tribal markings.

RASHEEDA (V.O.)

This is his manhood box given to him on his 13th birthday. It was our very own rite of passage. The idea came to me when we read Alex Haley's Roots together.

IMAGE: Kunta Kente running north.

RASHEEDA (V.O.)

We filled this box with letters of wisdom from the men in his life.

Rasheeda opens the manhood box.

RASHEEDA (V.O.)

He replaced those letters with medical marijuana.

INT. CRENSHAW HILLS - MASTER BEDROOM - DAY

Rasheeda paces in front of Ryan.

RASHEEDA

He's not even old enough to have a condition requiring the use of medical marijuana.

INT. CRENSHAW HILLS - DINING ROOM - DAY

Rasheeda and Ryan sit across from Zaire at the table.

RYAN

It's no longer a matter of if you are using, we need to know what you are using.

ZAIRE

Just weed.

RASHEEDA

What are these straws for?

ZAIRE

They come with the blunt wrapper.

RYAN

Where do you buy blunt wrappers?

INT. CONVENIENCE STORE - DAY

A CHUBBY CUSTOMER stands at the counter. Rasheeda approaches the STORE OWNER with an empty, cellophane, blunt wrapper.

RASHEEDA

Do you sell these here?

The owner examines the wrapping and Rasheeda suspiciously.

STORE OWNER

Not this kind.

RASHEEDA

Do you sell any kind?

STORE OWNER

Yes.

Rasheeda pulls out a straw.

RASHEEDA

Do these things come inside?

CHUBBY CUSTOMER

Yeah, they do.

Rasheeda looks at the customer.

CHUBBY CUSTOMER

That's what the paper is rolled on.

RASHEEDA

(to Owner)

Let me get one.

The owner hands her one.

CHUBBY CUSTOMER

You don't want that one. It ain't  
flavored. They got grape, cherry, root  
beer. You look like the cherry type.

RASHEEDA

(to Owner)

How much...for the cherry one?

STORE OWNER

One Dollar.

Rasheeda unrolls the blunt packaging and discovers the straw.  
She tosses everything.

EXT. CONVENIENCE STORE - DAY

Rasheed and Zaire walk out.

ZAIRE

You didn't have to throw it all away.

RASHEEDA

Why are you smoking weed?

ZAIRE

'Cause.

RASHEEDA

'Cause what? 'Cause is not a complete sentence. It's not even a complete word.

ZAIRE

It helps me relax when I'm mad. And it makes TV funnier.

RASHEEDA

What are you mad about?

ZAIRE

I can't get mad? You don't get mad sometimes?

RASHEEDA (V.O.)

I do get mad. I'm mad now. I'm mad because I've been warning him since the day he was born.

INT. METRO HOSPITAL - DAY

A NURSE bring 18-Year-Old-Rasheeda her NEWBORN. She whispers in his ear.

18-YEAR-OLD-RASHEEDA

Marijuana is a gateway drug.

RASHEEDA (V.O)

How do I know this? I come from a long line of addicts.

INT. CRENSHAW HILLS - LIVING ROOM - DAY

Rasheeda holds up a photo of a thin Black man.

RASHEEDA (V.O)

This is my Uncle Preston. He used to be a computer geek. Now he's a crackhead.

Rasheeda holds up a photo of an even thinner Black man.

RASHEEDA (V.O)

This is my Uncle Shank. He used to be a Black Nationalist.

FLASHBACK 1968:

INT. BANK - DAY

YOUNG UNCLE SHANK points a rifle at a BANK TELLER.

RASHEEDA (V.O)

Uncle Shank used to rob from the rich and give to the poor.

INT. PROJECTS - DAY

Young Uncle Shank hands a beautifully wrapped present to a LITTLE BLACK GIRL.

RASHEEDA (V.O)

At least that's what he told me. My mother says she never saw a dime of that bank money. Anyway, Uncle Shank no longer robs banks, but he still shoots heroin. Both of these uncles started out smoking weed.

INT. METRO HOSPITAL - DAY

18-year-old-Rasheeda whispers in her baby's ear.

18-YEAR-OLD-RASHEEDA  
Gateway drug.

INT. THAI RESTAURANT - NIGHT

Rasheeda and Donnie sip on Thai iced tea.

DONNIE

Don't worry so much. He's a smart kid.  
He'll figure himself out.

Rasheeda can't help but worry.

RASHEEDA

I read his journals. I found them in  
his closet. He writes a lot rap songs  
about getting high and having sex. He  
also writes about his future. He wants  
to own a smoke shop...or a tattoo  
parlor...or an MMA gym...or the army.

DONNIE

The army?

EXT. TREE - DAY

Rasheeda has tied herself to a tree. She holds up a sign and  
chants.

RASHEEDA

Hell no! He won't go!

The ARMY RECRUITER looks uncomfortable.

Zaire just looks annoyed.

ZAIRE

Stop being such a hippie mom and let me  
go to the army.

INT. THAI RESTAURANT - NIGHT

Donnie smiles.

DONNIE

He will figure it out.

RASHEEDA

Anyway, what did you think of my film?

DONNIE

I thought it was endearing.

RASHEEDA

You're being nice to me 'cause my kid  
smokes pot.

DONNIE

I am French and unlike Americans, we never say anything just to be nice.

Rasheeda is distracted by the public display of affection happening at the booth behind Donnie.

Donnie turns to look.

DONNIE

I would totally let you do that to me.

Rasheeda grabs her jacket.

RASHEEDA

You are French. Take me home.

Donnie looks pleasantly surprised.

RASHEEDA

Home to my husband. And you can't come in, so don't ask. You know he doesn't like you.

The two walk toward the door.

RASHEEDA

And take off that damn scarf. Directors in America don't wear scarves.

DONNIE

Aronofsky wears a scarf.

RASHEEDA

Touché.

INT. GREYHOUND STATION - DAY

Rasheeda watches as Zaire walks away with a duffel bag.

RASHEEDA (V.O.)

My son decided he'd rather live with his grandma in Cleveland, so she sent him a bus ticket.

INT. JUKE JOINT - NIGHT

GRANDMA sits at a card table with FOUR HARD LOOKING WOMEN. A cigarette dangles out the side of her mouth. She holds a cell phone in her non-card playing hand.

RASHEEDA (V.O.)  
I sent my mother a list of do's and  
dont's.

INT. CRENSHAW HILLS - MASTER BEDROOM - NIGHT

Rasheeda sits on the bed with her phone.

RASHEEDA  
Did you really read the list?

GRANDMA  
Uh huh.

RASHEEDA  
You gotta drug test him - randomly.

GRANDMA  
Uh huh.

RASHEEDA  
And he needs to see a counselor so he  
can find other ways to address his  
anger.

GRANDMA  
Uh huh.

Rasheeda hangs up.

RASHEEDA  
I don't think Zaire should live with my  
mom.

RYAN  
Really?

RASHEEDA  
You haven't been objective about my  
mother since she shot you. It was an  
accident. Get over it.

RYAN

Why would your mother bring a gun to my house?

RASHEEDA

We are not having this conversation again! Goodnight, I need to get some rest.

She turns out the light.

RASHEEDA (V.O.)

Blame it on parental fatigue. We let him go to my mother's.

TITLE: 6 MONTHS LATER

INT. AIRPORT TERMINAL - DAY

Rasheeda and Ryan sit uncomfortably on the hard seats in the arrival waiting area.

Zaire descends a nearby escalator.

RASHEEDA (V.O.)

My son came back for his spring break. His visit coincided with April 20th - International Weed Day. We hardly saw him. And when we did, we did not like what we saw.

INT. CRENSHAW HILLS - LIVING ROOM - DAY

Rasheeda holds up a photo of the new Zaire. He is tatted from head to toe. His pants sag mid calf. He is surrounded by a cloud of smoke.

Very loud rap music infiltrates the room.

RAP MUSIC

*Money. Hoes. Money and hoes. Money.  
Hoes. Cars and clothes.*

Zaire dances around Rasheeda.

RASHEEDA

Is this song appropriate?

ZAIRE  
I don't know. I'll change it.

RAP MUSIC  
*Pussy pussy pussy pussy pussy pussy.*

Rasheeda shuts it off.

ZAIRE  
You don't like songs about cats?

RASHEEDA (V.O.)  
He never made curfew.

INT. CRENSHAW HILLS - FRONT DOOR - DAY

Rasheeda places a key on a string around Zaire's tatted neck.

RASHEEDA  
California curfew is 10pm. I want you home at 9:45.

ZAIRE  
You scheduling me mom?

RASHEEDA  
9:45 or don't think about leaving here.

ZAIRE  
Alright, I'll be back.

INT. CRENSHAW HILLS - MASTER BEDROOM - NIGHT

The clock reads 1:30am. Rasheeda and Ryan lie in bed.

RYAN  
Where did he say he was going?

They hear the front door open.

INT. CRENSHAW HILLS - STAIRCASE - NIGHT

They confront Zaire.

RYAN  
Do you know what time it is?

He shrugs.

RASHEEDA

Your plane leaves in 3 hours. Pack your shit.

INT. AIRPORT TERMINAL - DAY

Rasheeda watches Zaire ascend the escalator toward the gates. Wrinkled clothes hang out of his carry on.

RASHEEDA (V.O.)

He did not listen then either.

INT. ZAIRE'S BEDROOM - DAY

Rasheeda hurriedly stuffs a duffel bag with Zaire's scattered clothes.

RASHEEDA

You went to sleep at 2am and did not think to pack for a 6am flight?

INT. AIRPORT TERMINAL - DAY

Zaire is still ascending the escalator.

RASHEEDA (V.O.)

I don't know what will become of my son. I hope he never opens a smoke shop. I understand they can be just as dangerous as liquor stores. I damn sure hope he doesn't end up in the military. I hope the proverbial French wisdom is true - that he is smart and will figure it out. I hope he does not go the route of Uncle Preston or Uncle Shank, but most of all, I just hope.

Zaire exits the top of the escalator and disappears.

THE END