

THE LAST BLACK MAN IN SAN FRANCISCO

by

Joe Talbot & Jimmie Fails

1 - EXT. HUNTERS POINT SHIPYARDS - LATE MORNING

An eight-year-old African-American girl with knockers in her hair stands on a desolate sidewalk. She licks a sticky caramel candy with practiced savvy and gazes — spellbound — up at something much larger than her.

A group of men in white hazmat suits glide along the pavement, strange Darth Vader breaths heaving from their space-masks. They load pieces of trash and plants into hazardous waste bags. In the distance, more men in white suits crawl on a decaying dock, collecting various items.

Several feet away, a middle-aged African-American man in a jet-black suit and a red bow tie surveys the scene from atop a soapbox. He shouts at nobody in particular.

BLACK MUSLIM PREACHER

Why they got suits on and we
don't?

He pauses for effect, though he has no visible audience.

BLACK MUSLIM PREACHER

This water been nasty as the
devil's mouth for 50 years and now
they want to clean it up? Why now?
It's not for you and me. No sir.

A pair of voices cut across the empty street.

VOICE 1 & 2 ACROSS THE STREET (O.S.)

Tell 'em preach'!

The preacher continues, oblivious to the voices. He points his chin in disgust, past the little girl, at the men in white suits.

BLACK MUSLIM PREACHER

They need those suits cuz they're
weak. They are potential humans,
of course — God did indeed *make*
them after all. But they haven't
evolved yet. Weak lungs, weak
hearts. They need masks to breathe
the air they've made us breathe.

VOICE 1 & 2 ACROSS THE STREET (O.S.)

That's right!

BLACK MUSLIM PREACHER
That is why, brothers, I urge you:
do not consummate with white
women! Do not contaminate the
seed. Don't-do-it!

VOICE 1 & 2 ACROSS THE STREET (O.S.)
...Awww man.

We see that Voice 1 & 2 come from two African-American teens, JIMMIE FAILS and PRENTICE SANDERS, the preacher's only audience. They sit idly at a rundown bus stop across the street.

Jimmie leans against the remains of an old, '90s Marlboro ad that nobody's bothered to replace, while Prentice sits on a dingy seat.

Jimmie's barrel chest and Terry Malloy-esque beanie make him look like a relic of the past, an accidental homage to the working class of yesteryear. His shirt ruffles in the sea breeze - it's the only one he owns.

Prentice's salt-and-pepper hair and thick round glasses hide a handsome face. His long Gumby-like physique is cloaked in a burnt-orange three-piece suit.

Prentice eyes the road where he hopes the bus will be coming from.

JIMMIE
(impatiently)
Can you check your phone to see
when it's coming?

The preacher picks right back up, undeterred by the shift in his audience's sentiments.

BLACK MUSLIM PREACHER (O.S)
When you mate with an inferior
being, you create inferior
offspring. Leave 'em alone,
brothers. Leave-em-alone!

Jimmie eyes the digital "NEXT MUNI" sign. It displays "\$#%&*" where the arriving times should be.

JIMMIE
Maybe we should just skate.

BLACK MUSLIM PREACHER (O.S.)
When your day of judgment comes,
will you be storming the gates or
in bed with the master?!

JIMMIE

Fuck it.

2 - EXT. HUNTERS POINT - MOVING - MOMENTS LATER

Prentice and Jimmie ride together on his skateboard. Jimmie kicks, pushes, and maneuvers, while Prentice clings to him like a backseat passenger on a motorcycle.

They skate past decaying docks and dilapidated industrial buildings.

The preacher's sermon continues.

BLACK MUSLIM PREACHER (V.O.)

But I digress. This here, THIS is the Wild West. The final frontier of Manifest Destiny. The last plot of land unclaimed. The last edge of the city, last edge of the country! One step further and you're drinking that filthy, filthy salt water.

Jimmie tastes the salty air as he picks up speed. Prentice clasps Jimmie's chest tighter, his mountain of hair blowing like a dog with his head out the window.

BLACK MUSLIM PREACHER (V.O.)

Lightyears from their beacon of ci-vi-li-ty! We live in a lawless land! Which means there are bandits.

They skate past a man getting robbed at gunpoint.

BLACK MUSLIM PREACHER (V.O.)

Rogue sheriffs.

Past a policeman beating a defenseless teenager.

BLACK MUSLIM PREACHER (V.O.)

Painted ladies.

Past a row of hookers who call out to Jimmie.

BLACK MUSLIM PREACHER (V.O.)

Early settlers.

Past a white couple unpacking boxes from a moving van, looking anxiously around the block.

BLACK MUSLIM PREACHER (V.O.)
Beware, most of all, of the
nervous newcomer. His blue eyes
know what we don't - that come
tomorrow, he'll be here and we'll
be gone. That Emerald City is
creeping a closer every day. We're
way out here, but we're not far
enough.

In the distance, the gleaming towers of downtown San
Francisco glint menacingly through the fog.

BLACK MUSLIM PREACHER (V.O.)
I digress! Fear not, brothers. We
are fisherman. And we are cowboys.

Jimmie and Prentice gallop through the hills.

BLACK MUSLIM PREACHER (V.O.)
We know this land and we know this
filthy water. We've been living
off it since before it was
"discovered." Our frontier is
lawless and it is filthy. But it
is ours. And it will remain so.
But only if you fight for it.

Prentice puts his foot to the pavement, slowing the boys
down, and points to a housing project with a line of people
filing out the door. A sign above the otherwise ordinary
residence reads "The Candy House."

PRENTICE
For the road?

Jimmie nods.

3 - INT. CANDY HOUSE - MOMENTS LATER

Stacks of bright candy boxes crowd a cramped living room.
Beyond the candy towers - some of which appears ancient,
vintage and dusty - two young boys pour syrup into ice-
filled cups while watching "Tales from the Hood." LORETTA,
the matronly proprietor of the makeshift store, sits behind
a counter with a cash box on her lap.

Jimmie and Prentice salivate over the cornucopia of candy
as they approach the counter.

LORETTA
What can I get you, baby?

PRENTICE

Uhm...

The woman smiles apologetically at those waiting patiently behind the boys.

PRENTICE

Are you still out of Saltwater Taffy?

LORETTA

I'm sorry, boo, but you are the only person that buys that nasty ass shit, so I didn't even bother restocking.

Prentice looks vaguely disappointed.

PRENTICE

Charleston Chew then.

She bags the candy with mechanical precision. The brown bag is stamped with the logo: THE CANDY HOUSE. She turns to Jimmie.

LORETTA

The usual?

JIMMIE

Yeah. But make it two Twix this time.

LORETTA

You're gonna get fat again.

She pulls out two Twix bars, M&Ms, Sour Patch Kids and bags them.

LORETTA

That'll be \$2.50 total.

JIMMIE

I thought they were only 25 cents apiece -

LORETTA

Jimmie Fails, if you don't like my discount you can haul your ass a mile down the road to a grocery store.

He concedes her point. The boys pull loose change, buttons and lint from various pockets, and pool it together to pay for the candy.

4 - EXT. CANDY HOUSE - MOMENTS LATER

The boys sit on the curb in front of the Candy House, ripping into their respective treats.

Their silent enjoyment is broken by a series of small, mechanical explosions. A rusty, run-down car clunks toward them, emitting strange duck-farts and yellow smoke.

Jimmie stares at the approaching oddity.

JIMMIE

Bra. That's my old house.

The boys watch the car as it gasps for breath.

JIMMIE

Me and my dad lived there. Until
his ass drove off with it.

BOBBY, a sniffing addict who bears a strong resemblance to JB Smoove, sticks his head out of the taped-up window without stopping the car.

BOBBY

Jimm-aaay!

JIMMIE

(unenthusiastically)
Hey, Bobby.

BOBBY

Haha! All right now!

Jimmie's eyes track the car as it huffs and puffs it's way out of the frame.

PRENTICE

The bus!

Prentice sprints to catch the bus; he runs like a kid that never played sports. Jimmie breaks his gaze to catch up with Prentice.

The two boys scramble onto the bus, which reads "99: ZUCKERBERG'S PLAYGROUND."

5 - EXT. DUBOCE PARK - EARLY EVENING

The boys exit the bus into an altogether different world. The post-sunset sky casts a light blue haze over the manicured trees and succulent garden boxes that grace the street.

The pair walk through Duboce Park, a modern version of George Seurat's "Sunday Afternoon" painting. Strollers, laptops and dogs nearly cover the sloping lawn.

The boys turn a corner with increasing deference, heads tilted upward as they admire the grand homes that line the street. Golden light spills from the windows, offering glimpses into the early evening routines of their owners.

6 - EXT. "THE HOUSE" - CONTINUOUS

The boys come to a stop in front of a beautiful but crumbling three-story Victorian.

And so their weekly ritual begins: Prentice takes a seat on the curb, respectfully giving Jimmie his space. Like a little boy in church, Jimmie removes his hat and stares in reverence up at the house.

The Victorian's worn rouge and chipped gold trim give it a fading grandeur against the backdrop of vanilla homes. A witch-hat tower sprouts out of the steep shingled roof and big bay windows wrap around the detailed front.

The boys gaze up at its tattered majesty.

7 - AN HOUR LATER

Jimmie and Prentice sit curbside, their eyes still locked on the house before them. Jimmie takes a drag from a cigarette.

A once-green '90s Camry pulls into the driveway.

Their eyes shift from the grand home to the sloppily-dressed, rotund man who emerges from the car. The oval-shaped gentleman trudges up the front steps of the house and disappears through the front door.

JIMMIE

We've been sitting out here for 10
years and these ass-clowns *still*
don't acknowledge us.

Jimmie flicks his cigarette and begins vacantly spinning the wheels of his skateboard.

Just then, an approaching truck catches Jimmie's eye. As it nears, his eyes widen. The truck's logo reads: "HAULER MOVERS."

Jimmie begins spinning the skateboard wheels with increased enthusiasm as the truck inches closer.

The truck parks in front of the house.

JIMMIE

Oh shit.

The wheels of the skateboard turn hot as Jimmie continues to flick them, his eyes fixed on the front door.

The oval-man reappears on the front porch, accompanied by an equally round wife. The couple greet the square-shaped movers and together enter the house.

JIMMIE

Holy shit.

PRENTICE

Do you think they're...?

The movers re-emerge, holding opposite ends of a tweed couch.

Jimmie tosses his board into the air. Prentice scurries off to retrieve it.

JIMMIE

(more to himself than
anyone else)

Shit, shit! Y'all leaving? They're
definitely leaving! Oh shit!

Jimmie gazes at the house with a new look of hope.

On the front yard, the couple share a final moment with the house before retreating inside to finish packing.

8 - EXT. THE FILLMORE - MOMENTS LATER - MOVING

Jimmie barrels down the block as Prentice half-jogs to keep up. Jimmie can barely contain himself.

JIMMIE

It's my manifest destiny!

PRENTICE

I don't think that's what it
means.

JIMMIE

It means this shit is destiny.

Prentice looks confused.

JIMMIE

When my grandpa got here, all this was a ghost town. None of this was here. My grandpa was the first black man in San Francisco.

Jimmie smiles at the sound of that. They pass rows upon rows of Victorians as they march back towards the bus stop.

JIMMIE

He settled this land. Cuz that's what he knew. He was born on a ranch, grew up herding cattle. But when that dried up, he made the pilgrimage out West. On horse! With a gang of others on horses.

9 - EXT. DOGPATCH - LATER - MOVING

The two boys walk past the shipyards on their way back to Prentice's house. Jimmie's story continues to unwind as he winds himself up.

JIMMIE

Can you imagine? That many days on horseback. Death Valley. The Grand Canyon. Mexico. Nebraska.

PRENTICE

My grandpa said they came here by train.

JIMMIE

Your grandpa never says anything.
(beat)

Took my grandpa a year. But that was nothing. When he got here, he decided he was going to build his own home. From the ground up. Like Black Paul Bunyan.

10 - EXT. HUNTERS POINT SHIPYARDS - LATER - MOVING

The two boys walk past the projects. Jimmie tears into his last bag of candy, still going.

JIMMIE

Fuck, dude. It's been 13 years,
but I still remember every little
detail. You don't forget that kind
of shit. So Muslim dude's right!
Crazy as he is. My grandpa
manifested his destiny and now its
my turn. Still wanna date white
girls though. Why do you think
those preachers always wear bow
ties anyways?

PRENTICE

Nation of Islam? Not sure. Perhaps
proof of their manual dexterity?

PRENTICE

Or maybe they think they're, like,
a notch above regular ties?

11 - EXT. PRENTICE'S HOUSE - CONTINUOUS

A group of six goons, or thugs, congregate feet from the front steps of Prentice's home, an old sea captain's lodgings. Hovering over the house loom the most notorious housing projects in the city. The projects overshadowing the dock and house give the setting a ghetto-Tim Burton feel.

We get the feeling that although the goons' homes are elsewhere in Hunters Point, this slab of concrete is where they live.

NITTY (the group leader), BIG RICK (second in command), ZUMBIE (Big Rick's bigger little cousin), D (don't call her Desirae) and a few others kneel over a ratty hairball comprised of dust, dirt, hair weave, and god knows what else. Big Rick joins the kneeling group.

BIG RICK

The fuck is that?

NITTY

Tumbleweave.

Jamal picks at it with a stick.

NITTY

But the real question is: from
who?

D

I seen your mom last week, Zumbie.
And she looked like she was
missing a little bit on top.

The group bursts out laughing. Zumbie gives a weak smile,
attempting to mask his wounded ego.

Prentice and Jimmie approach the front steps. Jimmie
finishes off the remains of his candy, as Prentice
hypothesizes about the Nation of Islam.

PRENTICE

(chewing)

Perhaps the bow tie symbolizes a
butterfly. It's a metaphor for the
one's spiritual metamorphosis.

A couple of goons on the circle's periphery turn.

BIG RICK

Y'all was catching butterflies?!

D

Probably was.

ZUMBIE

That's fucking gay.

Jimmie disregards the easy joke.

JIMMIE

We were trying to figure out why
Black Muslims wear bow ties.

Nitty turns to face them.

NITTY

Cuz white people used regular ties
to hang black people in the South,
nigga.

Jimmie stares unblinkingly at Nitty. Prentice stealthily
sneaks a Sour Patch Kid out of Jimmie's bag.

12 - INT. PRENTICE'S HOUSE - THE LIVING ROOM - LATE EVENING

Jimmie is sandwiched on the couch between Prentice and his
sommnambulistic GRANDPA. They both wear the same glasses.
Waves of shimmering blue light illuminate their faces as if
radiating from an aquarium. Between the evocative Georges
Delerue score and the television's reflection in the

Sanders' glasses, we can gather they're watching a 70s-era maritime film.

Through a window behind the threesome, we see Prentice's rowboat, hitched to a dock across the street. Beyond the dock, we see the twinkling lights of ships that sprinkle the Bay. A hulking freighter passes across the window.