

## A Strange Loop by Michael R. Jackson

*A Strange Loop* is a self-analyzing, self-acknowledging, exploration into the life of a fat, black, and queer man and the challenges he faces in his relationships to his family, fellow artists, grindr hookups, and himself. Each song is a snippet from Usher's life, creating a spectrum of his thoughts and feelings. Nothing is in stone but a reaction in the first emotional notion.

Thoughts, emotions, memories flash and flicker around Usher overwhelming his senses. [Intermission Song] The Thoughts appear on stage swarming around Usher further stressing him out till he breaks out in song. With high hope and clarity Usher works towards a better [Today], heading first into the bright honey tint atmosphere, greeted with warm rays. As his thoughts begin to trouble him, the honey tint fades to a tart purple and Usher sits alone on a bench cloaked in a dreary white. [We Wanna Know] The echoes of mama's voice, the chilling notions sting with an icy turquoise as Usher can do nothing but still and take the mental humiliation and guilty trip. His form exposed and vulnerable in the bright icy light, because he knows Mama is right. With the phone call hang up, Usher again sits alone on the bench, cloaked in the dreary white, as the [Inner White Girl] starts to kick and break on to the stage, soft ribbons of pink and lavender tease around Usher dancing and singing. With the drop out of the music, Usher is alone again with his thoughts contemplating the end of the number lingering in the limbo of the dreary white light. While Dad steps on stage, the dreary light meshes with a chilly teal, the regret and guilt from a father's missed phone call. Dad's shadow casts across the stage like an eerie memory, haloed in the chilling teal [Didn't Want Nothing]. With the opening of Usher's Grindr app [Exile in Gayville], a heated yellow lights from below. Contorting the face shadows of the tricks on the stage. Usher's blood boils with frustration as he is "Blocked" from other men. His anger floods the Grindr profiles in a bloody red, with the music drop out. Usher stands alone on stage backlit in a stream of bloody red light. The scene returns to a dreary white cloak over Usher this time on a subway bench as he works on his musical. With Agent Fairweather's call, purple columns of light blast up from the stage with the notion that Tyler Perry is the writer Usher maybe hired to work for. Trapping Usher in a box, he struggles to escape the towers of light. With the notions of "Race Traitor" a ghostly green blasts the emerging Ancestors as they wake from their graves to confront Usher and call him out. They are from a nightmare and are unworldly forms with shadows casting all about the stage. With Thought 2's exit usher is trapped in a cone of light while [Writing a Gospel play]. Usher struggles to stay focused as he sells himself out. Usher makes a phone call home, while a beam of a chilly turquoise breezes in from behind as Usher's father talks about the "A" word. With the entrance to the Airbnb, a stained tooth yellow splashes across the scene as the [Inwood Daddy] pulls Usher into the space. They sit on the edge of the bed and with Usher's discomfort, an abrasive hot pink blasts across the bed. The chanting from the Gayville minstrels cause the abrasive pink becomes an overloading red of heated climax. Usher confronts his parents, the dreary white light bleaches out the color as he pours his heart out to his mama, with the transition into the Gospel Choir rays of purple and teal streak across the chorus as they sing praises of AIDs. Mama sitting and witnessing all is blasted in the icy teal, while she starts to understand the cold feelings Usher as held within. Usher stands alone, again in a dreary cloak of white light. He starts to reflect on his events of what made himself. As he focuses the dreary light fades to a dark blue, carefully holding him against the world as he reflects, a mixture of emotions

and colors ripple on Usher as he relives events in his childhood. The memories fade and Usher's new look on the end of his show moves him back to the beginning of [Today], A honey glow graces Usher and fills the space as he faces reflections of himself. As the Thoughts rush off stage, the honey beam of light swoops closer pulling all focus to usher as he rings the chimes for the end of intermission. Blackout.