Excerpts from *ten flapping elbows, mama*
by Khulile Nxumalo
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Newphenomenal, giant flowers

put up
revolutions
in your little life, an ambling question faces you
how are we living,

in the wedges
in the crevices
of broken cities, home of liquid
spiders, on the palms
of the moon!

as diseased mouths breathe war, speak in
the language of unrest or speak like water, dream child
that rough
roads will bring you
to the door
of a little tenderness
little lavish fields, child please dream, your teeth
in the wind, will you
holler

bruised beautiful things

louder
than the tears of films, larger than crowds?

I heard a secret man
tune spring to the rhythm of his feet -

Today he is a fluorescent
coat in a cage
and a baldhead

he straddles and he floats,
he chooses polka dot
bowties instead.

today he swaps
knowledges for the
childrens; this man so alone in life,

nectar-nipple
or knock knees. he is a jagged revision
the moment's man of a mission -
there is heaviness upon us.

today he stays forgetful
stays very stingy,

bruised friends,
he bruises them in the place.

tonight he’s brightening blinded.
tonight he is inviting a bible
that what it has got giant wings.

It's been raining since/ seitlhamo and enia

oceans lick us still,
    brick the heart, and
make the insides a static hi-fi, since
near the mountain end some only begin see their feet
and since i am soft and strong
with large eyes that eat
and since empty tins breed brain canker
and since voices drop on like water,
gazing into that bristly centre
of darklights,
since the trouble with the affirmations of the sky
is that they misinterpreted they get imprecated
since the forest began hoarse singing
and each and every one under their arm carries what is
                a feed for his place

and since coming to is a victory
the way through the door has been clarified
we dab with dirty water, and since you walk so slow
or it is too late to tell and since some deny that trains
                are the chunk-chunk

sense of it, the story so hard to swallow, they deny
right as five coaches of electric trains fall outa their
perforate weak dreams, and so wake up
frail and tender wanting to be touched,
the air was said to be infested, people died in
 multitudes, nothing left to give. since
coming home is a sky –
that spread forehead like
a sky.

The healers

(for all of ma' pikinini, as I see kelwyn's haghia sophia*)*

we are walkers, here, sharp heels sharpened on the edges of
grass. people stroke the curve of the earth here, the reason for
rounded circles lives here. know that skies may not reply. sweetnesses,
laying bare the reason of joy, that is approaching here. an
island on a green hand, jonas gwangwa just brassing out. we
arises like a hum, count heads bleeding bright through the ears.

people were healers here. one of them sparks from deep inside.
unfolds slowly to the mellow rays of eyes that are bulged on a
day firm with all the leopard patterns. dreaming was painted
here

healers, drivers of light. gathering all the tributaries, open
hands, to come tend their injuries there. said i came here with a
taste of dry wire scrapping my head. said my head was a late-
comer here. said i left a
 storie/stellar. a preparation river.

nothing
happens here,
now i always follow the furrows. i cannot end the seeing
of furrows.

we awake upward here. look, she beats on the water's skin. a
platform of drama like a new heart, holding a high leaping sun,
commander of all angles, all the way. some realm this is,
always brought forth and quickly taken away. the expanding
piano's soft
tread upon shimmering cymbals. the shining clarinets
that dance baby smiles in miserable air. The
drumtongues, have thrilling scarifications. pregnant like the
equator. but my mother your grandmother. in the end

we never knew why her lessons ended up colouring my world as
red, white and black and would one day wake me up as a red dog.
it's a reticent picture. unless there is a schedule to the voices that
are calling you.

young ones play suckle, itchy milk of green figs from grandfather's
solemn tree. throw sticks on the streams that ran near the pave-
ment. the children laugh, as the sticks ride the waves of rainwater
streams. photons in their breath, sounds of lone intrusive
steps from a far away desert, far away calling them to heal this
world. nothing happened

that was all we heard of the library of
beat-keepers
as we walk into a voice that starts with a fractured
window,
people here speak with rounded corners
of a continent and a meeting of the hungry, so welcome,
i bought some tulips

trailers and trailers / bloom and blaze,
you are a trace of countless seeds, incredible beauty, trailers,
trailers and trailers of red crosses

each new day narratin'
the full story
of our huge roofed, vaster, cosmos.

Into the whistle's nostrils

joy has no generation gaps
nor silences in between
like broken denture. No owls'
bleak eyes blinking
when the question in the air
stings in the eye

a grip, the clasp of hands
is so strong
we're stitching the lesion to the rock
no empty *klevaz*
no one had become
hidden schisms, victims or slow songs
simpering like a basket
under a leaking tap –

when the trees begin to speak out
they are saying to the bioscope on the ground
i know you too
even in your dense silence
silence the bad silence. When it happened

that a mumbling voice swelled inside
the crowd that had brought itself here
here we were about to experience
the pangas of labour. The bleeding
will cease
for some time

naming ceremonies began in a miracle
that had also brought
itself here to welcome dried foliage
reclaim their lushness – *happy bestday*
happy bestday
happy bestday to you
happy bestday sban'sbani (vumani bo?
vumani bo? do not ignore
my frenzied drumming behind our song – the bleeding
may not cease until our hearts abandon
their rhythm: *lamazwe*
anomoya ngesaba umoya
And doors
of a dream
are too dark
when waking life
demands its own answers too

as to why these newborn babies'
tiny fingers keep poking into
the future's blank screen and trial and error
knocking, (there was a shadow trembling behind
        their pregnant eyes tightly shut
        vibrating with voices like a shrill inside
        the nostrils of this whistle)

        an agony of a twisted trance
inflicted upon identifiers
with human progression. chained and
cemented to rock
come forth
sycophantic vultures
to feed on our vitals

really these were very strange
children. they bubble truth. no child
ever falls out into a vacuum (the angry spit
droplets of their utterances
fall through the air
and disturb its quiet. when the dream ends another life
must begin – sure we still rotate with earth
to frame the door of this dream
wherefrom torrents of strange children in the strange
situation fell out – one by one

wailing *sokokota thina sokokota thina sokokota*
thina – why because
we must upturn and update this trance tradition

so we are going to upturn and update
with force – poke this rubble and mess
refuse and cobwebs
otherwise without the answers we need
the knocking is an air against words
to be breathed and farted
without odour without meaning

    (this i must tell you, there was
once a time when those who make and give birth to life
were always there, you see it was right here
they mumbled it is sad to see
a lost generation and a generation gap
at the same time. then tu!
silence silence the bad silence.

maybe
their pregnant eyes – our children have
pregnant eyes! but children say
separating tangents from circles
leads to simple frustration
of how it happens – they see how it happens
that electric fire, in thick life size boots
presses you against a corner
scattering liver and mind
swirling
twirling
tornadoes and tides we see we see

and then
there is nothing. why.

you see we – the strange children in the strange
situation
have it scrawled on our forearms
that shut eyes are fire
that what we see is not a creation of a restless vacuum
that we are not making sketches from blind voids

we are going
to poke this rubble and mess
otherwise...
why
because
there are
answers we need.

why won't mongane's stars'
sinister whispers louden tonight
what is fate
if i have one eye
who dons the blame (that cap one size
fits all
those that are
those that have been here
with bigger designer, there is nothing new
about you or us

and waking life is demanding
its own answers and the strange
children begin searching for the
central question

something said during a short break – Motherfly

must be proud
to have thinly escaped the unturnings of the water's
helix
when the spoon snaked into the cup, gasp
so it seems

because everything does
first of all. It seems like
the strange can hear
brains that distil poison
they say they hear fingertips painted red
flailing devilish droplets

(and they wept all the time
inside, each time the blanket of night
falls over the world. they say it pains
to be stagnant with stampede of agony
alive and stomping
against the insides of your heart

or races of squares fitted into crooked
triangles
and confused circles. many many baby
tender minds will hunger strike
when even these grey knuckled wrinkled hands
cup so soon at the face of the little one – *vumani bo?*
Siyavuma!)

so it was pure despair
when many woke up to decide
to hang their nerves, organs and things
on a kilovolt electric pylon

forever and ever

is a spine electrocution that plays back
each time answers staggered tripped
and fell
only to rise up as questions
even the world so big and round
plays *black mapantile*
because it knows you are searching for it
    you walk. it walks too
    you stop. it stops too
    you walk and walk on
    stop. look back
    it is never there
a spine electrocution each time the tv

radio newspaper and gossip never told us
why why why

Another
one of our trial-and-error children is intent
on picking up papers
why sweeping soil of soil to find soil there
when they had resumed to painstakingly study
themselves. the strange children.

why because it came out
much much later that what
is stealing our oxygen is big and has
big arms (open so wide)

like if I am ant, you elephant
what will happen
if I am ant and you elephant erected firm
like an electric pole. swashbuckler child
answered that

when we are many – the army of
ants
we will crawl up your nostrils past the
hairs and chew the belial in there to
death. we will

crawl past the cigar smoke
why because ants' persistent determination
is workers who know their story
is workers who listen
to their dream's clang
strue's god there's millions of us in here
to uproot

why because we have once inside a moment
encountered a hoard
of silly beings just like you
donned in fluorescent groping playing
camouflage in the cement bush
just like this belial does
here inside your head there is the answer
to why
answers became
disguised as question – just last year
when you were hear to experiment
with sanity we fell hard
from the staircases

of
disillusionment

why because we created you out of that creative
moment
see see
the dongas remaining. not so repairable.

the world rolls
and thieves of dark with it too
having forgotten that all
is guaranteed an appointment with the
kindest sun tomorrow morning ... eyes of the world
are rolling now as we speak behind the loudspeaker

behind the loudspeaker are the strange
children,
when they had decided
to shake out the streets
for the whereabouts
of the central question
the central
situation. The Question avalanched
from nowhere and clubbed us each on the head

only i survived a stray tightrope walker, peripheral
with the mountains, apparently i must tell you this
threnody
that is:
lemini
iyeza
nakuwe

why i am
in a din and rotting
in the sun still up here
in rubble and bloody fuzzy times
lots of people will live in there again
and again down there, the masters who chose
my matchbox casket are under the sun still
command torrents of acid over the frustration
of numerous things hanging like washing with the discipline
of nappies
talking to the wind under their wings hanging
on electricity pylons

of this, there, the blurred figures and shapes taking form
the mass of mothers and fathers

is coming
towards me here
to the darklights where light dries and goes and then
days are dark what to do with them darklight brings no
comfort i say even to the one who paints life with a
sensitive
whisker. yes. we are life the original model of all life
form sculptured to figures of
ice. melt. there is no more moss near the tap, for your to
tell your
lies to

still
mothers and fathers, they
never reverse.
one way. i was given birth to and i am giving birth
still why because all of them hanged on
electric wire so this is why life feels like the longest lesson
on the pliable presence of a stone i was
life steamimng baby when we first met, but new eyes and
callow
all of us forgot
to see your question how
it feels to be born
at the most right time how we lost it too,
the end
of drought, one we dreamt
about
once why it throbs to see
a generation gap wilted times
and the ever searching clasps of new generation at the
same time, we are losing
generations each and every time

it is so much
of story getting retold when

“order is going. there is no place
for a story retold.” the mothers and fathers are urgent now

“why because we inhaled it too in past times
the threnody of the future walking through
closed doors and walls. we dreamt
a spectredom vanquished,

our children

those that are and those that are gone, come back with us,

it always comes out later that it is pure despair
to never have waited
for the world
outside your head
to come
inside your head
then both move together,
yes our world is rolling when
we speak

anything else is pure despair.

Festina's echo (i'm returning i'm returning i'm returning

First
you said
I breathe brown there a damp earth's
throb you love to knead.

Yesterday clanged and cracked
without you. The wrestler is ridiculous
upon flakes of rocks, reptile style
like a frozen
waterfall,
with big moon beckoning
his backside,

dreams of a fly
feeding rock the tenderness of its abdomen

rock gave back warmth
in return,

I know

What do hearts do
when they eat each other?

Lately
I've been
growing peas and belts
inside a dim lamp, soul fanged
between the very same corrugated walls of madness

oversize shadows skulking over my eyes,
I think I am wrestler thinking of diepkloof's ongoing
dust. The damp clamp of your tentaculate outgrowths
around my
sinking forehead and the way you were

reaching in

eager to spin
Zone 6's foreway sky, my own tired hand/roof
over my poet's carpet
does leave the earth.

I met your smell
at the hem of the door, then
you said

you were an unhappy telephone line and mouthed
imprecations about a dismembered core

I brushed past
your chest of choices,
and i got swallowed in – like when you lean
when you take off a decision like you take off your shoes

We loved each, near a straight line
of white tables, a million laughing years which said
it was sore at the ankles and just disappeared
into this the season of hard drivers/ flapping hearts
rough scraping our backsides

le kelesenke. tsena ke diswitsi tsa lerato, crackling rivulets
crackling favourites, crackling tremendous
disappointation. *Ke tlisitse lemmu* from the dead river
I'm returning with echoes and elongations
I'm arriving with the restless trees.

My lover still blows

music
of my ear
a water
stare,
spent
rooms can be hostile
to unaccompanied words

air stones

bread with a beard

just lying there

wrinkles in my ear
drum's skin
that hum next door
absent love blowing through,
whose furious fingers fasten
as they

fold out.

Benediction

"They hurled insults at the sky..."
Chenjerai Hove – *Shadows*

a wooden spoon in porridge
of yellow mealie meal,
about to bubble boil

in a motivated economy above us like the nature of eagles,

you took it out
with such violence
lump and very disillusioned,

like a winter sun you twist you ways
like a dog that has eaten its feeder. very insignificant

moon is ignored
when sun overpowers
with daylights spreads the peacocks.

you have a life such as busy,
if i were to eat you, i would be eating
an ocean flashing
on the television screen

drenched with shivers
not from the piercing cold

you dangle and wilt with sweat
not from the blistering heat

run an arrogant marathon behind honey coated walls,
balaclavaed thieves

lurking outside your lights, oh you have the buttons to
provoke

news that
meander inside our ears
and wriggles rivers in the wet tunnels there, we have
bloated stomachs
resilient their ramblings are

so bright unfulfilled and naked,
willing on rounded wishes

in those dark doors we suspect you are forgetting, under the

truncheon of soft socked feet,

forever churning out the wheels of your journeys of silence. We
are left to linger in the suggestions in soft dying voices say
again. *Amen.*

Take a piece clench
outa my mouth, please
leave me my eight fish net strings
I use them to convoke a tenor, and craft beaded
Guitar letters for the hand of a wife

Don't come here howling
these days
cos you realised
the moon is fattening
in tune with the pace of the lump in our bellow,

A wooden spoon
swirling in the porridge
of yellow mealie meal volcao
about to burst bubble and boil

into a helldom so hellish it says end it here
and end it for good,

fully.