Excerpts from
whiteheart
by Lesego Rampolokeng
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I heard a sickening crack of bone and saw the blow split my mother's lip and throw her against the wall. he had a grin on his face as he advanced. in the next room my sister screamed the walls down. it came down hard inside my head. trying to break out. my mother was not crying anymore. the walls were. red as the sun crashed down through the torn curtains. he kicked her in the stomach & i saw her body heave itself off the weeping wall and crash out through her mouth. his mouth twisted to the side in disgust. it was a mass of twitches when the smell of vomit clung to the air. i was not crying anymore. i heard her say she loved him. my mother's pupils rolled out of sight. it was pain when she slithered down. slowly. softly. i thought i heard the rain come down hard beyond the walls. but it wasn't. he was a big man, & us? we were so small. all of us. i heard the walls crack. those blows slashing into my mother's flesh opened holes in my soul i'm still trying to close. i started to run towards mama & a huge boot rushed at me. my neck was liquid heat when i spun around. i felt the wall knock against the back of my head as i grabbed empty air. i always do. when he rips into me in the nights of torture i open my mouth to scream but it hits against my chest & goes down to where he's heaving & swearing through his clenched teeth. & his breath creeps against the nape of my neck.

later we walked for a long time. my sister moaned on my mother's back. the many times we had walked like that followed behind us. no, they lead the way. we have been walking for most of my life. we heard gunshots in the distance & a scream. lonesome. so tired. my mother's hand clutched mine. tight. i looked up in the dark.

mother your face cracks against my every minute. when hunger's heat grows i go out to the abattoir to scavenge for the skins they tear off the chickens & throw out. bring them to mama & she goes to the market & comes back with tomato & onion that's not too bad to cook & we have a great meal. at times the workers at these places are full of shit. i was kicked by one when i was crawling around hunting for some stray skins but someone held me back when i wanted to slice him like he did the chickens. jesus, those chickens kick & struggle & the blood spurts & writes on the wall their obituary. but it's fine when i close my eyes shut them tight against their cries & last pleas & then battles for their lives bite into the skins. i hate the sight of raw meat i can't pass the butchery without the phlegm hitting against my throat, hard trying to get out & i have to get on my knees & ask it please don't. it's not the same when they're cooked, especially fried. but i wonder about hell, often.

the mist rises. clouds form. their strata cracking separating then reforming. the sounds split open & fold back. in my mind things crash collide & sink to the bottom of the morass in my head. ah the stench of it, the decayed days. runny sores on the face of my memory. i stare at it through my rheumy eyes. see the day he was hitting mother again & i swore at him & he came at me & i ran. he reached out to grab me but i was halfway out of the door slamming it shut behind me & his hand got caught in the jamb. i turned & threw everything i had in my system against that door & stayed there while on the otherside his shrieks his screams his groans howls sought to break through the wood & i kept pressing. i pushed against that door & i could feel the tiny muscles knot on my back tear through my shoulders & pound against my temples. then i heard the bones crack & the sound bounced against the walls. & i became aware from a long way off of my mother first hurling threats then implorations pleas begging me to let go of the door. when she started crying i stepped away from the door. i ran out into the streets. an alley cat. no, gutter rat.

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The flaming cape fluttered in the blaspheming wind. IN NOMINE PATRI... father mason hump-arched the small of his back. the veins stood blue against the burnt-red of his face. i saw the sweat trickle down his face from the bald path to heaven between the bushes of his hair. i thought his fingers were going to snap. the fence sang as he bobbed it up & the woman on the other side pulled it up. it was a symphony. his breath was rasping, hers escaped from between chapped lips with the sound of pebbles rattling inside a tin. his upper lip trembled as i saw her buttocks ripple against the fence. they were glued to that wire. then she stopped moving & his face contorted. she said something & he hit the fence hard with his palm. frustration messing up the flow. i inched closer as the woman gave a fast twist to her waist & the preacher howled the heavens down.

“give me the money NOW” she cooed all honeyed discharge.

“oh blood of jesus...” he intoned.

“oh stop it up you little bleeding jesus.”

“he who dwells in the shadow of the most high who abides in the shadow of the almighty” without acknowledging the recitation, his other hand fumbled searching deep in the folds of his cape & coming out clutching some banknotes. he seemed to be wanting to count out a number, hesitated & pushed the lot through the fence. “my refuge & my fortress” his midriff stormed her castle. she smiled. pulling an inch forward, he gasped losing his line of thrust. both metaphorically & otherwise. & got it back seconds later. that great anointed man of the lord. “for he will deliver you from the snare of the fowler... ah...& from the deadly pest...pest... pestilence...shooo.” they were still butt to crotch against each other. she smiled thrusting the bundle under her t-shirt as he got feverish. “he will cover you with his pinions and under his wings you will find refuge...” he took a deep breath plunging deep under her jutting butt. he skipped a few verses.

“you will only look with your eyes & see the recompense of the wicked...”

“we need to get paid you know.” she ventured, but he was not to be led astray & unto the path of perdition. so, “no evil shall befall you no scourge come near your tent.” he was deep & cosy inside hers. the skirt ballooning as a slight breeze sought to cool that fire. he stood on tip-toe. her rear end was high up balanced against the fence. he dug his toecaps deep in the sand for leverage & went forth. “for he will give his angels charge of you... to guard you in all your ways. on their hands they will bear you uuuupppp!!!” he was being borne up indeed. he breathed heavily, the veins lay corded on his neck. i thought a pipe was bound to burst. & the wastewater would flow. “lest you dash your dick against the fence.” she tried to help him out with the psalm when

he seemed to go loose of the lord's work. the sweat running into the folds of the great blessed bloodshaming cape. he switched to psalm 92, that song of the sabbath. it would soon be time for a rest. "but thou has exalted my horn like of the wild ox..." yes indeed, i thought, catching glimpses of it as it slid in & out of her tent. "thou has poured over me fresh oil..." that fluid was dripping between their legs & hanging for a moment on the fence before dropping too indecently unto the dust. then she moved her midriff from side to side & the motion made the preacher peel his lips. i saw the jackal dance across his features. he pulled back somewhat & thrust. i was hypnotised watching from the corner of the church. they made that fence sing i said. "...to the music of the lute & the harp... to the melody of the lyre... for thou oh lord hast made me glad by thy work... at the works of thy hands i sing for joy..."
the sound of the piano playing within the church's bowels made its heavenly sounds. then they started going at it faster. the fence moved to & fro, father mason on the inside the woman on the outside, with the fence between them fucking through a hole.

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time floods my mental space i said. years converge & it's occupation time inside my head. my mind... it's all fractured. fragments. bits. pieces. broken. i try to gather my thoughts. but i can't hold them down enough to make sense. they pin me to the ground i carry inside me. knead my brains in the muddy waters of my existence. they take me over. fly my imagination's rotten remains in the wind. broken at every turn of my moments' parted buttocks. time talks to me. i don't hear it. still, across zones & spaces lineage pulls at my roots. my blood-tree shakes in the foul wind & rain attack. got to dig myself in somewhere. find loam & spread. but i die if i don't move. motion sustains me. when my grandmother died she called out to her ancestors to pardon & protect her son. when his brother her other only son died he was cursing them. both the living & the dead. i taste the human flesh & blood mash in the putrid wind. heavied. it starts to rain. & the blood & rainwater mix & the mud is as it has always been. like me. right down from beyond even my own creation. brown. the colour of faeces. it lies with a stench splashed all over my imagination.

like that life spilling out of the smashed windows of the car that's just come down on its head screeching its death around the corner. it turns over seeking some balance bounces around a bit on its wheels then going down under the call of gravity & putting its belly to the whatever little sick sun & rain & mud clings to its sides. before the sounds die down a group puts its hormones to rest when another call is in the air. louder. more urgent. they run & my heart nods its head at the sight of humanity shining through the gloom. i drag my broken shoes that way & hit again an imaginary wall. they've pushed through the broken windshield. another's brought a rock to smash another window & they jostle to get past the blood soaking the car & the injured chest behind the steering wheel. no the steering wheel is deep in that chest & there are spears of broken ribs looking me full in the face. sharp. eyes of hate.

the crowd pushes in to get at the victim's pockets. the said injured one inside the car's head lolls shakes a little from side to broken back side & i read the gesture as a vain whispered NO in the storm. these hands are indeed helping. that is, themselves. "well if we don't they will in the ambulance or even at the hospital the nurses & doctors too are known to steal rob pillage the estate of the sorry patients who find themselves in their care... ha that word care ha ha ya they do from the assistant up. or down. that is if you want to be moral about it..." i'm getting taught by them who know this longtime street. the one who had the first hands eager to be

of assistance gets kicked deeper into the car & the glass from
the window the other one's breaking takes a piece of flesh
from his face as hands grab pick & run with the banknotes
he's just grabbed out of that redsoaked dying pocket. as he
turns to fight for his loot a flying glass fragment slices through
his wrist & his & the victim's blood mix. predator & prey
merged in one. the sanctity of all life lost in the dirtstreet.
this is feeding on death time as the prophets promised us. i
turn my eye around deep into my head & back past history
as i turn walk away.

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i got out of it & walked. the machinery dipped into pulsing brains. the steel shining in memory. the whitewash floating on top of filth the sickness of mornings within mornings within... caught up in the spirals of comings laughing & goings of whorish tones in angel dress. doctors & mind technicians. hate days the ammonia days the ether heads the screaming the grinning the mucus on the walls. the callouses dripping dirt. the steaming madness. i got out of it & walked into the mist. the morning traffic rattles electrodes in some sadist's terror story wrapped around characters out of a cobwebbed cartoon book. the cold ground rose with my step & hit me on the head. out of town i felt i wanted to touch vomit to retch into my mouth swirl it within inhale it deep & feel the cleansing touch purity. the rain started to drizzle. i walked going nowhere. a wild feeling behind some mouthwashed sanity walls. "don't go near the inmates who knows what madness depths they might drag you into..." the man mad streets screeched around kicking dust laughing into the distance where i went wilderness walking knowing nothing about where it was. the gates earlier on clanged shut on mouth screaming wild countless days of subversion of values hunt & counter-hunt & lines thrown out. "make believe you're mad... hold on the thread is going comrade just a few more months while we tie things up." my mind was tied up but the time arrived so the gates clanged behind me where i started going nowhere. the soup bile food washed down with urine or smashed foetuses & dog blood plus cat brain for dessert i retched & merciless nothing came up. i had the paper tearing at the seams in the heat of my pocket some change & a pack of cigarettes. my inventory done i hitched the wrinkled time bag onto my back & crawled into the snail traffic approaching midday.

"you're very intelligent bavino bashana you'll pull through..." the whitecoat & grey eyes told me & gave me a kiss on the forehead handed me the bag & rushed in when i saw the tears welling in her eyes. & i stood for a while looking hard at the whitewashed walls insane against the background dirt mountain in the distance smoking old & creaking & i walked into town. i refused the ride on the back of the van white with a stripe of black new south african mad machine rattling into the distance of nonsense & wanted to feel the ground under my feet once more. ah tizzah, the papers celebrate. martyrdom is blood on the tracks leaders walk on extolling names riddled in the sand of history. labels in the stars. we see them at night in our nightmares. us who walk on the darkside of goo's glory. the near past was a time of great festivity. "we drink our own blood to the names of our heroes..."

they wrote tizzah's name in the capitals of the money stream world. "died in the name of a first class just cause..." i walk alone. look around to see if strange people are staring at my own strangeness but no. the breeze takes a turn where the road curves for the last lap. the city naps under cover of smog doping itself. the noise pollutes false tranquillity throbbing with my temples of doom. hooting cars are the salute to my return but someone is doing a death dance on the road & they're applauding them not me. the bag is heavy. i'm crying. use my sleeve. not good for a grown man however much fiction may have it. the rain-whipped dust whirls into my mouth where i stare agape at a child scratching in the dirt lifting filth to its mouth & the mother smiling thinking the child very clever to have found a worm in this weather.

the drizzle comes down darting pins on the tar they hurry away. what madness of the elements this. i walk on getting wet. feel like jumping up hurraying. the walls have left imprints imprisoning my mind. pinned there a load of needles stabbing through my vision start lights on the ceiling of my memory i close my eyes stagger into the road. invective bounces me back. a screech passing by hurls bricks shattering bottles on the pavement calling me some anatomical part of some misbred animal. i stop. & grin when someone rushing by laughs loud shrill through my stupor "are you mad you little malformed testis?" raincoats to the collar pass where i fall into step with society. the sleep jabs my eyes. i'm always forgetting where i am. but here i am now all round excesses surround me. there's cultured talk here, educated & ambitious. there's the crushing weight of the mass media. there are corporate tools on two legs. walking around with antennae deep in the head. there's metabolic malfunctions because there are magnetic tapes & cameras deep in the human system. there's alcohol floods & garbage heaps of great monetary value crawling around in foreign made automobiles, drunkenness on too much useless information & sex... sex... these are liberated creatures in flatland existence. not debauchery so much as a deep connection to too many horrors deadened senses & selective memory, they key in to memory values & make tiny withdrawals when the need arises. other than that they push all reminiscence deep in some alimentary corner. these are walking young adult terrors i might shake paws with raise fore-legs in grudging greeting. making me feel like giving out

> THE BABYLON MISSION REPORT. i shout it out in silence running down the walls of my depths. still it goes out to them. there's total transformation in this babylon with a mission. man & nation caught in stagnation. a total lunatic eclipse. unblock your

brain-pipes & bare the soul to sights of its own filth
now worms squirm on velvet cushions of a national
pshychosis. heroes of the aborted revolution. the poet
wrote shit & got a faeces deposit. they shat in his
mouth & when the rot stuck in his throat they thrust
a nail in it. got to the heart of the matter. the heroes
of the aborted revolution. this world is of starved
children. they got the glutton to set his appetite
straight strung him from a tree. by his intestines.
the heroes of the aborted revolution.

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