

White Seed Black Canvas

Lethokuhle Msimang

Writer

She stands against the window
in a striped cardigan draped
over her nakedness, He cannot
imagine the simplicity of her ambition:

to be wanted, to be asked to stay
in the act of leaving,
to have eyes hover over her body,
to witness a man, erect.

Secretly, she wanted the man who had conquered
her father, the white man, the beast on his knees
in awe of the vast expanse of her backside,
unsure whether to worship or covet.

This body will bear the weight of even
the mightiest of men. It will bend,
its long neck strangled, with hands over
its shoulders, forcing it to yield.

White seed, black canvas.
The white man has his fingers over
her lips. He doesn't know she is rich,
he believes he is saving her:

"This has to be a secret, you are my secret,"
and she cannot tell what arouses her more:
to be his, or to be a secret.
He draws a line between her breasts,



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circles the edges with his fingertips,
slowly wraps himself within her legs.
Between them, there is wetness,
and there is the sharp pain of his entry.

His are the first hands to grasp her body,
to pull her out of her mother's womb,
the first man to burst her open,
to expose the allure of licentiousness.

There is a white man calling her out of her body,
his arms are stretched open,
his body is broken, he hollows her out,
then fills her up, first with himself,

then with the faces of the lowest of men.
And the black man will promise his warmth in a bed of snow,
the black man will straddle her back to lift himself
out from the cold.

The white man will lay out a pillow
and a scarf deep in his closet,
the scent of shame laced with
the lingering odour of his passion

and she will remain there, supine,
a secret, hidden yet warm,
the shell of herself, wanting to live,
still.

Lethokuhle Msimang was born in Durban, KwaZulu-Natal. She graduated with a BA in Literary Studies and Creative Arts from the American University of Paris and an MA in Creative Writing from Rhodes University. Her poems have appeared in *New Coin*, *Grocott's Mail*, *Hanging Loose*, *The Paris/Atlantic* and *Stanzas*, amongst others. A collection of poems, *Hubris*, has been published and a novella, *The Frightened*, is forthcoming.

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