

White

Jade Bitomsky

White. Light, bright white. My little girl's weeping born of fright. A heart, a pulse, so low, chest tight. Murmured voices so light, heard within the bright white. A wet feeling, a body broken without flight. His heavy steps invade white sight. Like a cloud of grey, pushing onward the white. My little girl hushes, yet teeth chatter with fright. Weighty footsteps, stormy grey, no more light, bright white. I want to hold her, my hands reach into night. Veins of black cracking through the grey. A tightness of his hands, a shortage of breath, my little girl's cry, my foreboding decay. A finality is found in black, a lifetime lost in white. Serene and black. Cold and black. Dead and black. Silence.

I cannot scrub away the filth. It is in the small cracks, the lines, the wrinkles and folds of my skin. It is upon it, in it, under it. It is pumping through my veins. The filth. The shame. The disgust. I am infected and not even the scalding heat of the water surrounding me can remedy the infestation.

There are plenty of reasons for my paralysis. The world is dull, I am broken and the only thing I had to crux my sanity upon was my mother. Now she is lost, nothing but a pair of dull brown eyes, concealing a jellied mind. The light once found there, now shadowed and dismal, plays a sad sonnet of an unfortunate event within her stare, and the fear that had twisted her features before the final, conscious stealing blow, dwells still. A look that will never be forgotten and a moment that changed the life I was to live forever. Small things come back to me from time to time, like a disconnected montage. An occasional nightmarish memory, except it wasn't born of late night fire tales. It was real. The ghosts, the shells, the

empties, victims of his previous endeavours still lurking around the house like ghouls, waiting to catch sight of something that moved; movement somehow registered as food. He was real. Large and beastlike. His every step precise. A voice, honeyed yet haunting like a hurtling wind howling through what was never a home. I wish to erase it all; sometimes I even wish to be as she is, as they are, in a constant unconsciousness. The ghosts of this mansion. I would be blank. A white page. No longer would I relive that night, the night she was no longer of use to him. He had taken to her like an angered bull, as I cowered just outside the shallow corridor, listened and counted, fist after fist, blow after blow, waiting for it to stop as her sounds turned from howls, to sulking, to whimpers, then to finally nothing. No sound to ever come again. I am sure she could hear me weep for her, my love found within each fat tear. I had earlier learned not to interrupt him; the teaching had left behind small reminders across the white of my back, buttocks and the small of my ankles. Sliver-like marks, which shone like silver in heavy light. Nor will I have to suffer as she did, does, as the others do. I was to be his next notch. Another blank object. Another toy.

A sharp pain drew my attention downward, toward my chest, purpled and now beading with small pimple like blood spots, revealing my circular route with the steel wool I had earlier stolen from his kitchen, in the hopes that it could wash me clean. The water, now coloured by my lost innocence, seemed no longer clean enough to wash away the dirt.

I emerged slowly out of the deep-bellied bath, feeling the result from every fist, reliving every touch, every bite, every fingertip he had laid upon me. The pain between my legs being the most unbearable. My legs seemed unstable, as if they were not my own to control, attached to me but no longer a part. Just as the rest of my body, to me, seemed no longer mine but his. A cold, dead, body he could have. He would find no warmth in my skin should he try to lay with it again. Whatever was left behind, a soul, shall be mine again.

The small bathroom reminded me of a hospital. Sterile, cold and unwelcoming. It was shallow, and tight, with all its contents an arm's length away, from the small brass washbasin that embellished a wall-mounted mirror, to the feet of the tub, to the small chair my mother had carved from wood, the space between was pitiful.

Touching naked foot to floor sent a quick spasm, followed by a deep

burn with applied pressure, through my muscles. I was out. Two feet on the floor. I stood at the basin, peering at the reflection, no longer finding relativity within the features of my face. My face, I am sure, my mother would not even recognise; the slight slump on the left side, the swelling, the colours, the long scars and the missing chunks encased by ragged edging. I was no longer me but a monster.

Beaded water began to drip from the curls of my dark hair. I watched as one fell, then swooped and swelled and snaked down my chest. Like a maze at Fun World. Dipping in between the cuts, puddling in the gashes, finally dying, not finding that straight run of skin it had been hoping for. I was a painting, a portrait, a bizarre abstract arrangement of blood red, pink and purple. Painted by an old, rough brush. A clumsy, uncaring artist. I was nothing like her now. I was ugly, repulsive, ruined and disfigured. The world, from the few years I had known it, would no longer be kind to me. People would cry sorrow but their faces would play disgust. Not my mother's though. Her eyes would look past it all, and see me just as I was. Just as I had been. Together we would live in white.

I began the preparations. Took comb to hair until it was smooth before plaiting it down and binding it with some of the rope he had used on me earlier. The rope I had worked through with my teeth, strand by strand. It was now a small token of my strength, as was the dress, stolen from the hidden rack of many. It was my mother's. White silk, embedded with small stones, like diamonds. It had been designed for the back to dip low, to reveal the beauty of my mother's back, carved as if by a carver's hand out of ivory. That day had occurred in usual fashion. Drinking, dancing, laughing. A few friends to celebrate the union of, what had seemed, two perfect lovers. I remember I had felt content as we left the reception, and excited as we headed toward an unknown, a wild, destination. His home. An unknown prison, a mansion of rooms and doors, locks and secrets, horrors and ghouls. I remember awaking from the long car ride to the drone of the heavy iron gate being pushed open, and flipping around in my seat to watch him close it, locking it once again with a large heart-shaped padlock. How ironic, heart shaped, for he had no heart. I did not know that I was never to venture past that point again. A long time I have been here, a plaything that screamed for him, a playmate that could still react when hurt, unlike my mother, unlike the rest of the women, vacant and sterile, my mind was kept, alert, alive to register whatever affliction

he was in the mood to cause.

The silk caught on the damp places of my skin, as I pulled it over my body and zipped it up. The zip ending at the start of my buttocks, instead of encasing the small of my back as it had her. The constrictions of this dress were not meant for someone of only sixteen years; yet nothing in my life was as it should be. I cannot remember the feeling of having a friend, the warmth of a hot meal, comfort, love, happiness, what it felt like to have a soul. I would never know the romance found within a first kiss, embellished by the tales my mother used to tell.

It was time. Soon the rattling of the locks would deaden the air and the sighs of the rusty gate would confirm the devil's entrance. Soon he would be upon me. Soon I would be a shell. Beaten, raped and brains boiled. Just as my mother. Just as the women before us. I would be just another ghost that lurked the halls of this house, mind barren, unconscious, cooked. Just as the women following in our footsteps would be. He would rob, abuse and make tools of them all. Crush, dirty and kill them slowly. I could feel it boiling up in me again, the fear, the disgust. That hate and hurt, more than anything the pain of loss.

Clenching my fist tight, I slammed it into the wall-mounted mirror. Not even a slight crack. Drawing it back again, I pushed it forward with such anger and pace that I surprised myself. It shattered in place, miming the shape of my fist, showering shards about the folds of the white silk encasing my feet. Blood began to run, racing snakes of red charging down my fingertips, staining the places they fell as I clasped a small shard. The blood red looked amazing against the pure white of the dress. Nothing in the world will ever stay as beautiful or pure as the white of a wedding dress.

I propped my mother's chair in the centre of the dank room. When he was to open that door, he would be horrified at the mess he would have to clean. All the blood soaked up by the mortar to discolour it, disfigure it. All the blood that will invade the tiny hairline cracks upon the tile, seeping into every pin-size air hole and in the midst of all that mess, a body, one that he would finally have to dispose of. I dipped, slowly from an angled position upon it, trying to not rest on a place that would cause sharp pain. Trying not to relive the rough thrusting he had delivered, angry and animal like. Every plunge, ripping away at my innocence, had been a knife, every bite a burn and every punch had brought me closer to

the light my mother had always spoken of. Heaven, to my mother, was a place where all was pure; pure and white. Heaven, to me, did not exist. God did not exist. Man should never have existed. Flesh touched wood and a slight sigh slipped my lips as I found numbness, then relaxed deep into the chair.

I closed my eyes and tried to remember her smile, her laugh, the light in her eyes.

I smiled as the honey of her voice filled my mind, and the memory of her hands about my face quenched my anger.

I readied myself as I recalled the trail her fingers would take over my eyes as she sent me off to sleep, humming sweetly the tune her mother had hummed to her.

The slight flinch caused by the mirror shard threw up a flash of her angered face born from the day I had hidden in the garden and cut my own fringe.

White began to fill my memory's montage. My mother's humming taking away the unbearable pain, pulsing about my wrists.

Pure white was lost in red.

My life, from black to white.

I was free.