

BLESSED ARE THE PURE

Written by

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Inspired by true events.

30th March 2025
9th draft
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1 CLOSE 1

A haunting choral hymn rings through the darkness.

A droplet of clear liquid. Then, a drop of black liquid.

Slowly, the two merge. Mixing. Turning the clear drop black.

The drop rolls off the edge and plops into a pool of viscous, black liquid.

A leathery, white mask with human features gradually lowers into the dark until it's fully submerged.

CUT TO:

2 INT. COMMUNITY CHURCH HALL - DAY 2

The singing abruptly ends.

Silence. Drawn-out. Uncomfortable.

A congregation, heads bowed. Diverse, but united by their overwhelming, almost suffocating whiteness.

Right in the middle sits RUDO NCUBE, a Black man in his early 20s - the only hint of melanin in the room. His hands interlocked with those of the woman sitting next to him. LILY PEMBERTON - white, early 20s - is focused on the front of the hall.

PASTOR PEMBERTON (O.C.)

Amen.

The congregation raise their heads in unison, joining Lily in watching the front.

The PASTOR stands behind a lectern. He wears a robe with a white hood covering his head. Christ watches from the crucifix on the wall behind him.

The Pastor lowers his hood.

PASTOR PEMBERTON (CONT'D)

Just a quick reminder before we conclude: Friday's vote is to determine a cause for the Easter fête. Either the poor children in Africa, or erecting a monument in Her Majesty's memory. Remember your masks.

CUT TO:

3 INT. COMMUNITY CHURCH HALL - MOMENTS LATER 3

Members of the congregation mingle in the hall after the service's conclusion. Lily points people out to Rudo.

LILY

...so that's Mr Goodwin, he was my teacher in year 2. And then-

Someone hugs Lily from behind. She jumps slightly, tensing her shoulders.

MAN

Welcome home, petal!

Recognising the voice, she grins and turns round to hug her father. Rudo stands awkwardly to the side. Breaking away:

LILY

This is Rudo!

Rudo holds his hand out to Lily's father, who prickles slightly at the contact. Rudo notices, but ignores it.

RUDO

Mr Pemberton. I've heard a lot about you!

LILY'S FATHER

(Smiling uncomfortably)

James, please.

Rudo smiles, a hint of relief: all's going relatively well.

LILY'S FATHER (CONT'D)

(To Lily)

Your mum's back at the house, you know how she feels about this kind of thing.

He gestures around to the church. Rudo shares a glance with Lily, and gently nods.

LILY

Dad, Rudo's my-

PASTOR PEMBERTON

Sorry to interrupt...

The Pastor appears behind Lily's father.

PASTOR PEMBERTON (CONT'D)

...I'm just going to *steal* this one, if that's OK?

He eyes Rudo on the word "steal".

JAMES

We'll pick this up back at home?

The Pastor leads JAMES away, whispering to him while sneaking nervous glances back at Lily.

Lily turns to Rudo, beaming.

LILY

Well. I think he likes you!

4 INT. EN-SUITE BATHROOM - AFTERNOON

4

The sound of peeing cuts through the silence.

Lily sits at an awkward angle, her arm positioned between her legs. After a second, she brings her hand up from out of the toilet, trying not to let anything drip off the pregnancy test.

5 INT. LILY'S CHILDHOOD BEDROOM - CONTINUOUS

5

Rudo sits, contemplating, at the foot of a double bed, his surroundings a freeze-frame of a teenager's bedroom. Posters of Carrie Underwood and Taylor Swift. A battered copy of *The Famous Five* on the bedside table. A Golliwog peaks out from behind a picture frame, evading Rudo's attention.

Enthralled, he holds a mask, fingers tracing the human-like features: the slender nose, an almost agog mouth hole, the pale skin.

The bathroom door swings open. Rudo looks up to see Lily holding the test. He stands eagerly, leaving the mask on the bed.

Lily crosses the room and lowers him back down to sitting. Dropping the test next to the mask, she manoeuvres herself to straddle his lap.

RUDO

How long with this one?

LILY

The box says a minute or two, I think.

Rudo looks down at the pregnancy test: nothing in the window yet.

RUDO

I hate this bit. It's like waiting
for the results after an election.

Lily laughs casually.

LILY

This could change our lives more
than an election.

Rudo looks slightly thrown. Not expecting such a tone-deaf
comment. Lily senses Rudo's slight discomfort. She plants a
quick kiss on his lips.

LILY (CONT'D)

I love you.

Rudo smiles softly. Lily twists a piece of his hair, before
kissing him passionately.

The pregnancy test still sits next to the mask.

Positive.

An eye watches through a crack in the door.

6

INT. STAIRS - LATER

6

Rudo pads down the steps. He's alone. Pausing at the bottom,
he studies a photo on the wall. A young white couple beam in
front of a building, surrounded by Black children in school
uniforms. A handwritten caption reads:

James and June, Rhodesia, 1978.

Rudo clenches his jaw.

A hushed whispering comes from the dining room.

HUSHED VOICE (O.S.)

...one drop...

Rudo steps back from the photo, straining to decipher the
hisses.

HUSHED VOICE (O.S.) (CONT'D)

...half-caste...

Rudo takes a step closer to the doorframe.

HUSHED VOICE (O.S.) (CONT'D)

...dirty...

Closer.

LILY (O.C.)
(Whispering)
Are you going in then?

Rudo whips around to see Lily standing behind him. She grabs his hand and leads him round the corner.

7 INT. DINING ROOM - CONTINUOUS

7

The whispering instantly stops. Everyone at the table simultaneously snaps their heads round.

Deafening silence.

Staring.

A whirlwind of blonde hair and pale skin cuts through the air, barrelling towards Lily.

She wraps her arms around Lily's waist in a tight hug. Rudo smiles sheepishly, slightly confused at the eyes still locked on him.

LILY
Hello, my lovely!

Ignoring Rudo, the little girl leads Lily, by hand, to her seat.

LITTLE GIRL
You sit here.

She looks at Rudo, as if only just realising his existence. After studying his face for a second, she turns to her dad - on the other side of the table.

LITTLE GIRL (CONT'D)
Mummy, why is he look like that?

Rudo scoffs. Flustered, the girl's father stands abruptly.

BEN
Bella! That's not very nice. Lily,
I'm so sorry!

Gathering himself, he sits back down and Bella runs round to sit next to him, leaving the seat next to Lily empty.

PASTOR PEMBERTON
Are you going to introduce this boy
of yours?

Still in his white gown, the Pastor sits at the head of the table.

Lily and Rudo exchange looks.

RUDO
I'm Lily's boyfriend.

Lily's mother, June, grins, while James's brow furrows in concern. Pastor Pemberton's eyes bore holes in Rudo's.

PASTOR PEMBERTON
(Remains looking at Rudo)
Lily, how deeply... involved... are
the two of you?

Rudo finally concedes to the Pastor's oppressive gaze, as Lily's eyes hit the floor.

Silence.

BEN
So... is it true what they say
about coloured guys?

LILY
Ben, what the *fuck*? You can't say
coloured anymore.

Ben incredulously covers Bella's ears, glaring at Lily. Sensing the tension, June tries to lighten the mood.

JUNE
(Jokingly)
I'm not ready for a grandchild yet!

Neither Lily, nor Rudo reply.

Beat.

June glances at James, who looks mortified. The Pastor silently seethes, until:

PASTOR PEMBERTON
No member of my bloodline will be
tainted with mongrel blood.

Shocked but unsurprised, Rudo finally breaks.

RUDO
OK. No. Sorry, I'm not doing this.

Maintaining composure, he gets up.

PASTOR PEMBERTON

Sit down, boy. There's no need to get aggressive.

At his final straw, Rudo leaves the room.

LILY

(To the Pastor)

What is wrong with you? Oh my God!

Lily shoots a piercing glare at the Pastor before following Rudo out.

JAMES

Language! Especially in front of your uncle.

James looks at the Pastor, who watches Lily leave, deep in thought.

Silence.

8

INT. COMMUNITY CHURCH HALL - MORNING

8

The congregation. Rudo in the centre. Dark circles round his eyes, slightly disheveled, uncomfortable. Lily holds his hand.

Pastor Pemberton looms at the front of the hall, hood casting a shadow on his furrowed brow.

PASTOR PEMBERTON

Masks.

Almost in a trance, the congregation simultaneously pull white masks over their faces. More leathery and grizzled than the one in Lily's room, but these too bear human features. Tufts of wiry hair sprout from some, while others have doll-like blush pressed into their chalky cheeks.

Confused, Lily turns to her father.

LILY

What's- what is this, I thought the fundraising vote was Friday.

James meets her eyes guilty, before putting his mask on and facing the front.

Eyes flitting around, Rudo grips Lily's hand. He stands up, trying to pull her up.

RUDO

Let's go.

PASTOR PEMBERTON

Rise.

In unison, the congregation stands, blocking Rudo's way out.

RUDO

Lily, get up. We're leaving.

He tries to elbow his way past the people next to him, but they stay rigid, eyes glued to the Pastor.

PASTOR PEMBERTON

*Blessed are they which do hunger
and thirst after righteousness: for
they shall be filled...*

One by one, people begin to walk towards the front of the hall, depositing a small black or white ball in a wooden box.

Lily shakes her father, trying to get an answer, as Rudo looks for an opportunity to get out.

LILY

Dad, why are you ignoring me,
what's happening?

PASTOR PEMBERTON

*Blessed are the merciful: for they
shall obtain mercy...*

A sadness growing on his face, Rudo turns to Lily. Desperate.

RUDO

Please.

James walks towards the front. Lily tries to stop him.

The row now clear, Rudo pulls Lily into the aisle, her eyes on her father. He stands beside the Pastor, facing the couple with the rest of the congregation.

PASTOR PEMBERTON

*Blessed are the pure in heart: for
they shall see God.*

Rudo turns towards the door, only to see Ben and a couple of other congregation members blocking it.

RUDO

It's us. It's me.

PASTOR PEMBERTON

It's your turn. There's still time
for salvation. Save yourself.

Rudo turns to see James holding Lily's mask.

Christ looms from the wall behind the Pastor.

Lily looks at Rudo.

Rudo looks at Lily. She's still. Paralysed.

RUDO

I love you too.

A tear rolls down his cheek.

CUT TO:

9

CLOSE

9

A drop of clear liquid splats onto a flat surface.

A droplet of black liquid works its way towards the clear
drop.

Before they combine, the black drop stops.

The two remain apart. Separate.