

## *The Woman with the Hemorrhage*

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From *Soul Sisters: Women in Scripture Speak to Women Today*

A woman had been afflicted with a hemorrhage for a dozen years ... She had heard about Jesus and came up behind him in the crowd and put her hand to his cloak. "If I just touch his clothing," she thought, "I shall get well." Immediately her flow of blood dried up ... Wheeling about in the crowd, he began to ask, "Who touched my clothing?" ... Fearful and beginning to tremble now ... she fell in front of him and told him the whole truth. He said to her, "Daughter, it is your faith that has cured you ... " Mark 5:25-34



You are crouched low, my sister,  
swathed in black  
to hide your woman body.  
I wince  
before your desperation.  
The hollowness of your eyes  
reveals only your curled up self  
bent beneath  
your shame and humiliation.  
But ah,  
how could you stand, sister,  
weighted down  
by the condemnation of your world?  
Your condition  
damned by all.  
Your unceasing flow of woman blood  
was a curse they said  
(Not symbol of fertility)  
demanding isolation-  
like AIDS.  
In your eternal quarantine  
none could hold you,  
none could touch you.  
All were shamed  
to look on you, sister.  
Cursed you were  
crouching like a cur  
in your corner,  
yearning for the deliverance of death  
so long in corning.  
Twelve years-  
a lifetime it seemed-  
of isolation and loneliness

No meds.  
No insurance.  
No cure.  
No hope.  
What were your thoughts, sister,  
through all those silent days and nights?  
Or were you too afraid  
to think?  
Too damned to dream  
in your all-pervading darkness?  
Did you simply  
weep away  
all your tears  
till even your soul  
dried up?  
Did you feel your spirit  
slowly suffocate  
beneath the blanket of rejection  
that weighed on you?  
You have sisters, here,  
soul friend.  
Women hidden way  
beneath harsh cultures  
of female oppression;  
crouching also  
in dark corners,  
bodies swathed in veils  
to hide their beauty  
and the tears in their eyes.  
Your sisters are imprisoned still ,  
forbidden to walk in the light,  
afraid to stand up tall,  
deprived of education and employment,

starved of light and loveliness.  
We glimpse them now and then  
on television-  
dark shadows  
furtively fleeing from camera lights,  
angled to capture  
their blindness.  
We read about their horrific despair  
in the newspapers.  
You would recognize them, sister.  
For you know their story.  
And yours reaches out  
across the centuries to touch them  
as no other could  
but the one that shares  
their hell.  
What do you tell them,  
across the ages, sister?  
Whisper to me, sister,  
what was it  
that happened to you?  
When did life stir in you again ?  
Was it a voice you heard or  
a dream you dreamt?  
What drove you - risking death-  
from your tomb, sister?  
Was it a little seed  
that burst in you, pulsing in defiance  
then madness?  
What happened  
to raise you up straight  
no longer curled in your corner?  
Tell me, sister, tell me -  
that I might whisper your story  
and your secret  
to your sisters imprisoned  
across the globe!

One warm sweet day  
listening to life  
moving beyond my walls,  
I suddenly heard  
mysteries breathed  
that set my heart  
fast beating hard-

I heard  
of the blind seeing  
and the deaf hearing  
and the dumb speaking.  
Ridiculous, wondrous things!  
And I, who was dead,  
knew there could be no life  
in dead things.  
Already wrapped tightly in my grave,  
I dismissed  
the wild claims  
of the whispers,  
and clutched tightly  
to my dying-  
fiercely denying dreams and miracles.  
But, ah,  
the little bit of light, audacious,  
that had pierced my darkness,  
held fast in my deeps  
and would not  
be extinguished.  
Dallying and dancing  
in my guts  
like a newborn thing leaping  
for the light,  
it thrust me from my knees,  
quickenning my long-numbered muscles  
with strange new life  
that raised me up-  
all trembling.  
Erect and fearful  
I stood terrified on my threshold.  
And then, it seemed to me,  
that it was better to die  
for life  
than die from despair.  
So, gathering my skirts around me,  
I pushed open  
my long shut door  
and, all tingling with terror,  
stepped from my cell  
on warm and sandy soil.  
Alert now, for the first time  
since I was  
a girl running free,

I sought the light  
which shone in me,  
I pursued the whispers  
which beckoned me,  
further and further  
from my dungeoned self  
towards wide open spaces.  
All the while  
fear still held my heart,  
screeching retreat,  
and doubts rose up  
to shadow my light-too late!  
For I had already seen it ,  
pure and free  
in my mind 's eye.  
And, oh, it delighted me so  
I would die for it!  
So, step by step,  
faltering-near falling-  
but persistent,  
I kept on coming  
towards that space-transparent.  
I knew I need only reach out and touch-  
dare break death's rule ...  
Stretch further than I ' d ever known  
to share my secret dreams  
and tell my story-  
speak aloud my unheard truth,  
scream my dying  
in the face of life .  
And I did ...  
From, ah, so deep a place,  
my sorrow and anguish tumbled out  
before the sunlight  
which, gathering up my grief,  
absorbed it,  
leaving me  
resurrected,  
Alive!  
And in that wild, free moment,  
the blind could see,  
the deaf could hear,  
the dumb could speak,  
as now I do for you.  
Ah , sisters,

how loud and clear rang my voice  
that day!  
How I ran, delirious,  
across the open plains,  
singing my song of life!  
Listen, sisters,  
I sing it still-  
Listen deeply  
in the darkness that envelops you,  
absorb the secrets  
that gestate in silence  
germinating life yet too tender  
for blazing light,  
whisper your dreams  
in prison cell,  
nourish the grace  
of your Self  
in broken moments,  
and you will hear  
in your own expectant breathing ,  
the first notes-so soft –  
of my song,  
rising, rising,  
clear and sweet –  
for you,  
Soul Sister.