

# **Smeared Bodies**

**Sara Rochdi**

**A Collection of Crafted Poetry**

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**Foreword:**

“It's like staring at the sun. You know you should probably stop, but it's the most intense feeling in the whole world that you can't help but look.” - (Sam, Gypsy 2017)

Thank you Bella Cosimina,  
Tainá, Sage, Eli, Agathe, and Alice.

This would never have come to existence without these amazing people that have shaped my voice and made me who I am today.

Thank you Mom for your subtleties that will always live within me and through me.

## **The Green Room**

The wine spilled all over the frat-picked carpet  
Are the stains still there?

You call it the green room and  
There is nothing green about it,  
Except the stringy couch with all the ash in its cracks.

The paintings and brushes filling the space,  
Yet still making room for me to watch you.  
Do you still paint?

All the gods in that room –  
Statues and Tapestries and Paintings,  
Watching over you from every corner.  
Are they keeping you safe at night?

I knew how to walk around all the candles and plates laying around.  
I knew to turn your lamp off and check the door is locked,  
I knew that room all too well.

There is a new couch now.  
A gray couch. I thought it was pale pink,  
From a single tired glance.

Do you still call it the green room?

## **Vivisepulture Part 1**

I rise from my fourth death.

I feel my body sinking  
All the water molesting it.  
I feel my body drowning,  
The cries muffled in all the moaning.

I am lying to you–  
I am lost in my own head,  
I am a little of everything,  
I have room in me,  
I am hollowed out,  
You can fill it,  
You can put it all in me.  
Who am I to say no?

I look for someone to suck the water out,  
I wander around with nowhere to go.  
I run my fingers through my skin and hear my mother's voice,  
"You don't take care of yourself"  
I wonder if my dry cracks are large enough  
To let all the water out.  
I wonder if I even have any more water in me.

My body is a vessel,  
Floating around, looking for somewhere to settle,  
Looking for you  
To scream my suffocated shouts,  
To unchoke me, unpin me, untouch me,  
To hold and clean me,  
Like a mother would clean her baby, would wrap it.  
I want you to shroud me, and put me down,  
Safe and silent,  
Six feet deep and  
Five deaths are enough to finally put my body to sleep.

## PATIENT HEALTH QUESTIONNAIRE

(10 Questions)

NAME: Sara Rochdi    DATE:10/07/2024

Over the last 2 weeks, how often have you been bothered by any of the following problems?

(Pick between 0: Not at all, 1: Several days, 2: More than half the days, or 3: Nearly every day)

### 1. Little interest or pleasure in doing things

3

I've been dragging myself out of bed,  
I don't even want to fill this questionnaire.

### 2. Feeling down, depressed, or hopeless

3

Isn't that the question I'm here to answer?  
  
I am so far on the edge of the cliff that  
even the smallest force in the world  
can take me down to where there is no going back.

### 3. Trouble falling or staying asleep, or sleeping too much

3

What if I have all three at the same time?  
Does that give me 9 points?  
I am really winning at this.

### 4. Feeling tired or having little energy

0

I've been pumping caffeine and alcohol  
Into my veins and streams.  
I have more energy than a steed!

**5. Poor Appetite or overeating**

3

Coffee - Muffin - RedBull -

- Coffee -

- Pasta and Chicken - Repeat

**6. Feeling bad about yourself or that you are a failure or have let yourself or your family down**

3

I can walk myself home, I don't need YOU or YOU.

You are in my battlezone, and there are many men down.

The field is finally empty and I'm standing

With blood smeared on my face.

A prevailer of sorts?

I look around and see all the corpses,

I look for yours and lie by your feet.

So mercy me and pity me too.

I am no man.

I am pushing and pulling

And begging and imploring

To let me go wherever you go.

To let me be what I am not.

TOTAL: 15

(Healthcare professional: For interpretation of TOTAL, please refer to the accompanying scoring card).

## **Vivisepulture Part 2**

The dirt is infiltrating my body,  
From the same dry cracks that let all the water out.  
My body can't breathe,  
From every single thing that is coming in and out.

I've been punching the walls of my coffin,  
I didn't know that people could hear it.  
Six feet deep wasn't enough to muffle  
All the anger I share with my father,  
All the anger that follows me around,  
All the anger that keeps me not alone.

I keep digging and digging  
And punching and punching  
And shouting and shouting.  
People started to avoid my grave  
Spit on it and curse it and tell  
The groundskeeper to not water the flowers  
Brought by each past lover.

They visited me from time to time.  
Tears that watered withering flowers  
Words like you fucked with my brain  
And I have no more power.

Pity the next one after them,  
The next caretaker of all that  
No one could really take care of.  
And I keep digging and digging  
And shouting and shouting  
An echo's pressing sound.

My faith is restored and I implore  
The angels to take me,  
To where my mind can finally rest.



## Birthday Head

My 20th birthday  
I bled through my pants,  
And watched it stream down my leg.  
Reminded of my womanhood  
Fertile with an unfertilized egg.  
My mother would say that I am of age,  
“I had your sister when I was 20!”  
That I should start growing my hair  
So a two brain-celled man can play with my curls.

I wish you sent me a head on my birthday  
That would've made me laugh,  
Instead I get a birthday text,  
A birthday hug, 5 min of nonsense,  
And you jogging away like I'm coming for your soul.

Your reckoning has fallen:  
I can crawl and purr and flick my tip,  
Scratch your foot and still,  
You'll step on my paw and point to my bowl  
Never celebrated, always tolerated.

I am 20 now and  
Have inhaled  
Your morning breath  
For 3 years.

Remember the man who had a heart attack  
The night of our anniversary?  
I met his daughter – he's fine and well  
If you still remember, if you still care,  
We're not but hell  
I wish you sent me a head on my birthday,  
Your mixed paint all over it.  
That would've made me laugh,  
Lie on my grimy communal bathroom and fold in half,  
Catching my breath,  
Chanting “Happy birthday to me!”

## **Bubble Serenade**

Bubble inside a bubble inside a bubble.  
Eu estou apaixonada por você (I am in love with you).  
Fight or fly in the face of trouble?

We took so much space – a null.  
We leaned and laid and lulled.  
Bubble inside a bubble inside a bubble.

Suffocate the hurt and keep going  
Blind eyes can see light in the darkness  
Fight in the face of trouble.

Making dog bones and chasing them around.  
Picking up dog shit and seeding it around.  
Bubble inside a bubble inside a bubble.

See hell on the horizon.  
Grow wings and soar away.  
Fly in the face of trouble.

The door is cracked and I'm holding on  
To you from the peaking thread of your cuff.  
Bubble inside a bubble inside a bubble.  
Fight or fly in the face of trouble?

## Dear Lotus

I want to carry you  
Out of the murky water.  
I want to be your life vest  
I want to take you back to  
When you had so many dreams.  
Before you saw all that  
Hurt you.  
Your mom and sister on the floor,  
Cracked glass.  
Before you picked the tiny piece left and  
Stabbed your heart with it.

I want to take you back to before  
Your first heartbreak  
Before you cried your eyes to sleep  
And muffled it so no one could hear you  
So no one asks too many questions  
And tell you that you are a kid  
“What heartbreak are you even talking about?”

I want to take you back to before  
You crushed your heart so many times  
To whenever you felt loved.  
I don't know what time that would be,  
But I want to take you there  
And have you be forever.

I want to take you back to when  
Your mom held you so tight  
And you slept in her bed so still,  
Because she doesn't like when  
You wake her up at night.

I want to shroud you and unpin you  
I want to take off all the dirt I covered you with  
All the hands that should never have touched you.

Beautiful Lotus

I see you in the back of my mind all the time,  
I see the way you like to be spooned and held,  
I see your chain smoking and bad coping.

We only know that

Love is war,

Love is death and chaos,

Love was never for us.

## **Meat Sauce**

It was never about the fucking spaghetti,  
And all about that meat sauce,  
Your inherited recipe that took me  
3,460 miles back to where

I was told to close my legs when I was a child,  
Sit straight and eat with my right hand,  
So that the devil doesn't eat with me.

I sat lounging in that stringy green couch,  
Eating the fucking spaghetti with the meat sauce,  
With nothing but my bare hands.  
You looked at me while I was slurping,  
Wiped my smeared face and  
Hoped for it to taste like my mother's.

It was never about the fucking spaghetti  
And all about how we never spent a thanksgiving together.  
Something about that turkey...

Now I am all the days that you choose to ignore.  
All the taxes and mail you pile up  
In a designated mailbox on the floor,  
Stored there, out of mind.

It was never about the fucking spaghetti,  
And all about that meat sauce,  
I made it tonight for myself.  
Napkin in hand, I sit straight  
Something about having to wipe my face on my own now.

## Bare

I walked into a closed flower shop  
and asked for a bouquet.  
They were not meant for you anymore  
But I still got your favorites,  
And gave them to someone else.

I needed a dental bone graft –  
Bone grafts are most common for people in their 60s.  
From all the angry clenching and grinding,  
The space left by oppressed falling teeth.  
“Patient is a smoker!”  
“That explains the brittle holed bones!”  
Issue resolved, nothing to do with you.

I sat in our park waiting for you,  
I sat and I talked to shadows of trees—  
They molded into your existence,  
Brought your scent to my nose,  
And your taste that lingered on my tongue,  
As I kissed what was only a cold stone.

*Meet me and weather the wind storm  
Fire-weather hazards and I still  
Flick my burning cigarette  
How you taught me.  
It ignites the dry ground,*

Chain Reaction!  
I blame you for global warming,  
I blame you for my brittleness,  
I blame you for all the holes in me,  
I blame you for not blaming myself.

*Inside me there is a mark of which you  
breathe through.  
You can live in so many spaces with different faces,  
Trying to plead stealth  
I dare you to try.*

*In your last slip,  
I dare you to move through it all and find me.*

## Peel

I am an awful sleeper.

I wiggle my toes so I remember I'm alive,  
My rusty joints need to be cracked.  
I say that I feel like an old lady—  
I can't open my legs without waking up with cramps,  
And I know that's not sexy to hear,  
But I need to crack my bones:  
Head, neck, arms, legs,  
Snapping my body back together.

I look at the one that got away,  
And all of them got away.  
All the way up that hill,  
And I am bad at climbing, I only know how to slide.  
Mother always said to stay grounded—  
“There is nothing to look at up there.”  
But I see you in all the stars shining around,  
With a polluted air that my smoky breath made even worse.  
I have been rolling down and it goes:  
Head, neck, butt, legs.  
My insides are pressing and shredding,  
My stomach pain never left me,  
I'm not thinking about anything,  
But I'm thinking about how you're gonna suck on my nipples,  
Get them all hard, and leave me wondering if it was the cold  
Or my sexy ghost.

I am all I have left behind,  
And you avoid my eyes now.  
I remember glancing at you from your coffee shop's stained glass,  
And you used to look back and smile.  
Now you see through it and through me.

I only see you when the sun goes down  
The house is not black, it's grey and it's blue even,  
The smoke coming from my insides swallowed  
Away all the colors.

I am breathing through every cell,  
I am finding ways to clear up my mind,  
Weighed down, I press on the wet soil  
Falling over me.  
And it goes: Head, heart, arms, legs,  
Husked down and buried away.



## **A Winter Walk**

A winter walk together,  
I saw shooting stars with you and  
I wish I could give you my halfway-opened,  
Sparkle-lost, hazy eyes to see  
Crystals in the sky.  
I have sniffed you like a dog for three weeks,  
And I am a bad breed,  
Your scent leaves my flaring nostrils and  
Everytime  
I need to remeet you,  
Rebreathe you, retouch you,  
Catch up to your new bits,  
And by the time I do,  
I am already on the next bus back.

My arm won't know how to wrap around you,  
My body won't know how to hold you  
Fetal positioned.  
With a mouth pressing on my sore cracked nipple.  
My lips won't know how to press yours,  
I will lose memory of every curve in your body,  
And every mole I traced in the dark,  
With the tip of my sticky fingers.

A winter walk alone,  
You danced in the shadows,  
And I wish I were the grass you were stepping on.  
The tightness in my chest will never leave,  
The last piece of my heart screams to be crushed,  
And your feet are tiptoeing between the already  
Dead leaves.

A winter walk alone,  
I say your name a hundred times,  
I sit curled up on the marble floor,  
The freezing wind smacked my shaved head,  
And I'm colder than how I was before.  
"What was your name again?"

## **The Little Things**

“Find joy in the little things”  
And in my head it goes:  
Tuck my tail and  
Bow my head,  
In the face of divine power.

Your whale eyes should tremble  
In front of your minute existence.

Hold your breath until it feels like prayer.  
Kneel down and revere what you can't contain  
In your shaky hands.  
And find joy in the little things.

Find joy in the little things and be grateful,  
Love is not bold and it's not powerful.

Find joy in the little things  
And know that most people can be satisfied with that,  
A flowery branch in a tree,  
A goose flying around,  
A breath of fresh air,  
A loving kiss and a suffocating hug.

Find joy in the little things  
Is what I hear,  
But I'm a greedy fucker  
I take everything I can get and more  
I bow to my own power  
Because when I am on my knees  
Face down  
All that can pick me up is myself  
And my mother's proud look  
When I become more than she thought I would ever be.  
So pluck my feathers,  
One by one,  
Use them as ink for words to limit me,  
Tell me to love less and be less

The truth is I am too proud  
I am boastful and my love is loud .

I'm sorry for the little things  
The red smoke coming out of my mouth  
Scorching your hands that reach to smother it.  
Your smooth river swells,  
From your submission and my defiance,  
From your acceptance and my lack of it,  
Drowning us both,  
Into an imploding love.

## **On the Other Side of the Water**

The things we do to stare at the horizon  
Of land that will never belong to us –  
Mother is praying on the other side,  
On her knees at 5am,  
Praying for her smalltown child  
And in my deepest sleep, I feel her wrapping her arms around me  
“Don’t be scared sara, don’t be scared mama it’s going to be okay”

I’m trying to bring my mom to this land  
The land of the free  
And I am making commitments and dependencies  
That are sacrificial to my own self  
Is that what being an adult feels like?  
Is that what mother had to do to protect us,  
Save us, cradle us, and keep us alive ?  
Is this what liminal space really means,  
And why does it feel longer than how it should be?

30 years of liminal space.

I was 17 and I was 18 and I was 19 and I was fearful  
Of how much of my father I can perceive within me,  
Coming out in angry bursts and mistaken pride.  
I am 20 and I am 21 and I am fearful of my mother’s traits  
That are so much more subtle  
And so much more merciless.