

"The One Who Bleeds" - Adapted from [Grit and Grace by Caryn Rivadeneira](#)

Years. Every day. For years.

That's how long I've been bleeding.

I bleed because I'm not pregnant. It's what women do, or what we're supposed to do anyway. When there's no baby in the womb, the body sheds what it had prepared to nourish a baby.

But I have no babies. I will never have a baby grow in my body. Instead, I have blood. It comes not just for a short time each month, but constantly.



All day. Nonstop. Every day. For twelve years.

I'm sorry, I know this is not a subject for polite company. I'm sorry that I make you uncomfortable.

I made the doctors uncomfortable as well--oh they tried to help me, but they couldn't. They can't. And so they are tired of me. They, are *tired*, of me.

I am a symbol of failure, of limitations, of how the whole world is just past the edge of our control. For how can things be normal, how can the world be good when... the Bleeding.. Just. Won't. Stop.

Unclean, that's our word for it. I'm dirty, un-holy, out of sync with the way things are meant to be. And after twelve years, it's pretty obvious that there is no coming back, no getting my body back to the normal rhythms of life.

And so I'm not welcome around others. Whatever I touch, whomever I touch: unclean.

So all day I stay away, alone.

But then one day I hear news: Jesus is coming to my town.

Jesus, the one who gives sight to the blind and clean skin to the lepers.

Jesus is here! He can heal me! He can make the bleeding stop! He can put an end to the madness!

Jesus can make me clean.

So I get up. In spite of the anemia, even though the blood drips and stains my robes, I stand.

I pull my scarf tight over my head and peer out the door. One foot in front of the other, find the rhythm, keep moving.

First I follow the sounds of the crowds. Then I press my way through them.

I should turn back. I'm breaking the Law, it's my responsibility to protect them from my dysfunction. But today, I don't care. I keep going. I press and nudge and squeeze my way through. A few see the blood and back away--all the better for my progress.

And then, I reach Jesus. Or, almost reach him. He's there, just a few people ahead of me.

I stretch out my hand.

But I hesitate. Even one touch, just the gentle stroke of the sleeve of his tunic, will pass on my contagion to him. Whether the stories are true or not, whatever else he might be, he is without a doubt a holy man. Who am I to defile this sacred being with my imperfection? What if I ruin him, too?

Too late, the move is made. Maybe I meant to grab him... maybe I got caught up in the movement of the crowd... or maybe my fragmented body was finally too exhausted to do anything but cling to the slightest fragment of hope?

My hand touched him.

And something surges through my body. My womb tenses for a second, and then all is still. I've been *healed*. I feel it. I know it.

Jesus turns around. As though something has surged through him, too.

I've been caught. I've just touched a rabbi, a holy man. I knew I was unclean, but I touched him anyway.

I cower, overwhelmed.

"Who touched me?" Jesus asks. The crowd backs away. They point at each other, and then settle on me. Someone snickers. Another scoffs. I start to cry.

I step forward. I fall at Jesus' feet and tell him everything. About the blood. About the desperation. About the loneliness.

I can't stop shaking.

Jesus kneels down and lays his hand on my back.

The crowd gasps.

I freeze.

No one has touched me in twelve years.

"Daughter," Jesus says, "your faith has healed you. Go in peace and be free from your suffering."

Just like that.

What, don't look to me for answers! I can't explain it any more than you can!

The bleeding was gone. An act of faith, Jesus said.

My faith.

What about the others, the clean-vs-unclean, the lost years and lost dreams, the unfairness and out-of-control-ness of the world?

I don't know. All I know is that I touched Jesus, and he touched me.

