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*“Her feel for language really flourishes in **Bravely Brittle**.”*

Pulp de luxe

*“Whether she approaches something from a poetic or a humoristic angle, she is always comforting and full of compassion.”*

De Volkskrant

# Bravely Brittle

Sabien Clement

Bravely Brittle by Sabien Clement is a vulnerable account of Sabien’s own experiences with burn-out. Throughout the years, she felt as if she was being pulled apart, as the pressures and expectations both inside herself, and outside increased. Until something snapped. Drained, she couldn’t bring herself to do anything. Only life drawing brought her some relief. In her new book Bravely Brittle, she draws and writes herself a way through this contemporary malady. As powerful as vulnerable. As brave as brittle.

This is Sabien’s second graphic novel, after *Vel*, which she made in collaboration with Mieke Versyp (also published in French (Peau, Ça et La) and in English (Skin, Fantagraphics)).

*Sabien Clement’s (b. 1978) work is characterized by spontaneity. Tenderness, vulnerability, a longing for balance and security – these are the themes running through her work. Her lines are particularly eloquent: they masterfully express emotions, from happiness to grief – often in one and the same picture. She charms both young and old audiences with her illustrations: children especially like the humour in her lines and colours, while adults go for the poetic strength and deeper meaning in her work*



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**Original title :** Broosmoedig (Oogachtend, 2026. Hardcover, 15x15 cm. 88 pp.)

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Wednesday night 3:45am. Panic attack. Again.

Lightening flash.

Everything screams, howls, chafes. My skin is pulling around my cranium, airtight.  
Searing pain.

Lightening flash.

My head is pounding, my gaze turns inward.  
I try to stop it.

I can't.

Everything turns muddled, gooey. Black.

5

Lightening flash.

Lightening flash.

Lightening fl.

6

Tuesday afternoon, 12pm.

Body says no.  
Been the same for weeks, now.

Can't manage anything.  
To the shop this morning, full of optimism.  
Had to turn around halfway.  
No bread then, I guess.

7

This isn't working. Any ideas?

What if...  
We divide the cake into crumbs instead of slices?

But I love eating cake...

Cake crumbs are cake too.

Also true.

8

Thursday, 11am. New day. Slept badly.

I kept raising the bar, year in, year out.  
Stretched and stretched my aspirations, efforts, and ability.  
Faster! More!

Until suddenly: SNAP - the rope broke, no more energy.  
My body empty, my mind dark and tense.

Stretched to the limit, other things trickle in.  
As if foul, greasy thoughts get free rein.

How do you say no to what chafes and cuts, and slowly scars?

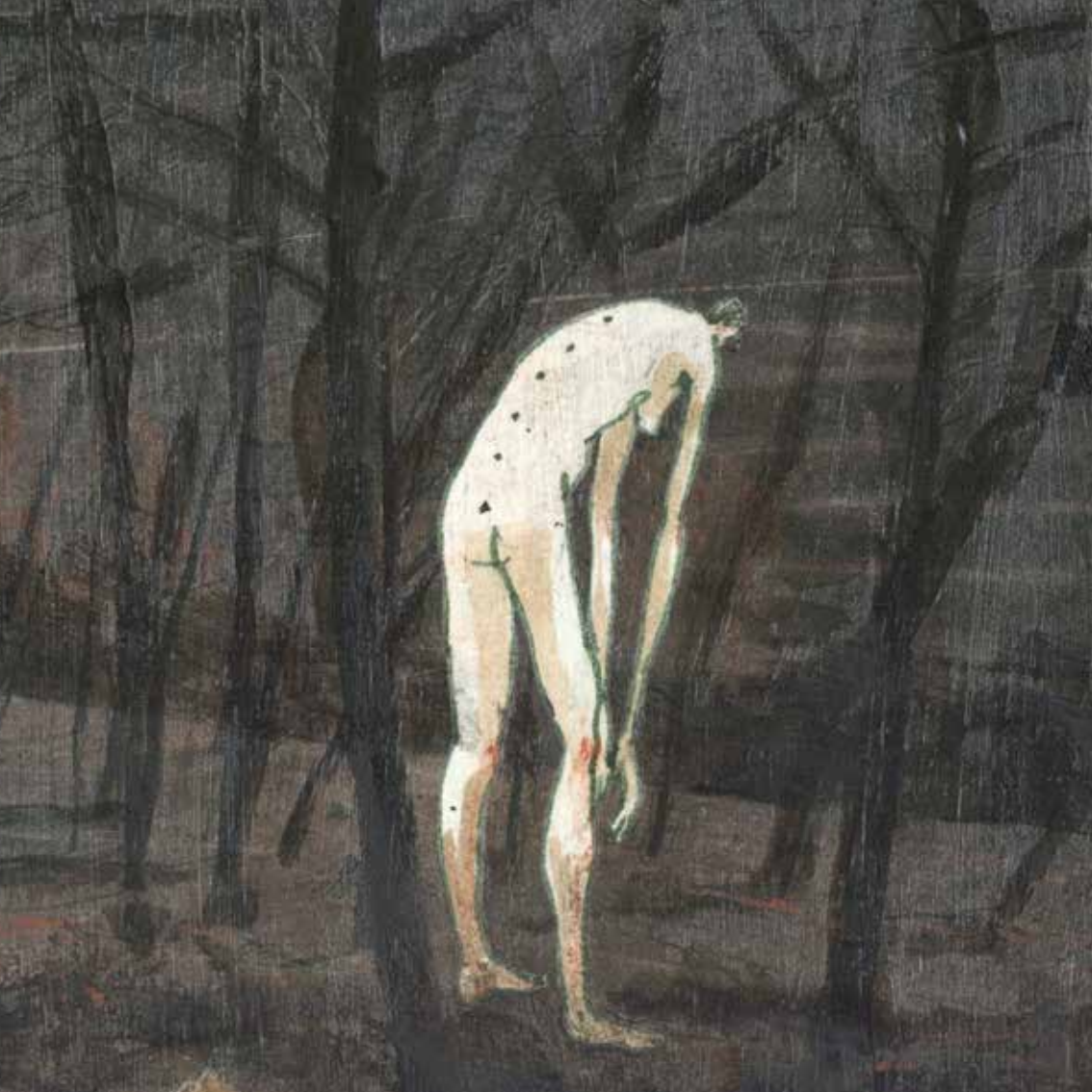
How do you let go of what sticks to you like syrup?

9

Letting go







Woensdagnacht, 3.45u. Ik pieker. Angstaanval. Alweer.

Bliksemschicht.

Alles schreeuwt, giert, schuurt. De huid rond mijn schedel  
lijkt zich vacuüm te trekken.

Snijdende pijn.

Alles voelt eng, nauw. Geen ruimte, geen adem.

Bliksemschicht.

Mijn hoofd bonst, mijn blik draait zich inwaarts.  
Ik probeer dit tegen te houden.

Lukt niet.

Alles wordt een onoverzichtelijke drab. Zwart.

Bliksemschicht.

Bliksemschicht.

Bliksemschicht.



Dinsdagmiddag, 12u.

Lijf zegt nee.

Al weken aan een stuk.

Niks lukt nog.

Deze ochtend vol goeie moed naar de winkel.

Moest halverwege omkeren.

Zonder brood dan maar.

Zo lukt het niet.  
Jemand een  
oplossing?

Wat als...  
we de taart niet in stukken  
maar in kruimels verdelen?

Maar ik eet  
zo graag taart...



taartKRUIMELS  
zijn ook TAART.

OOK  
WAAR.

Donderdag, 11u. Nieuwe dag. Slecht geslapen.

De lat heb ik jaar na jaar hoger en hoger gelegd.  
Mijn willen, doen en kunnen gerokken en getrokken.  
Gaan! Meer!

Tot plots: KNAP – touwtje los, energie op.  
Mijn lijf leeg, mijn hoofd zwart en gespannen.

Met de rek eruit, komen andere dingen erin.  
Alsof vieze, plakkerige gedachten vrij spel krijgen.

Hoe zeg je nee tegen dat wat schuurt en snijdt,  
en langzaam littekens weeft?

Hoe laat je los wat kleverig als stroop aan je blijft hangen?

