

# Voronezh. Samara. Tyumen.

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They have a saying in Russia: Live in Voronezh, work in Samara, die in Tyumen. In honour of Saint Rose, born on the banks of the Voronezh, fed the hungry and the poor of Samara, torn apart by wolves in Tyumen on the exact date that she had herself predicted.

Saint Rose, born in Voronezh, the city on the river. The city built by Peter the Great. Saint Rose, who was called Rose when her nurse swore on her life that she witnessed Rose's face turn into a flower before her eyes on the day of her birth. Saint Rose, raised like a flower in the pot of dirt and dung that was Voronezh, the diamond on the river Voronezh. Saint Rose, patron saint of Russia. Rose with the beautiful singing voice. The nuns swooned and thanked God for sending them the voice of an angel. They begged her to stand up for solos during Sunday service. Saint Rose, who could not stand to be desired, filled her mouth with sand and drank scalding coffee and finally took a vow of silence.

Saint Rose worked in Samara. Samara, the city of industry, economic capital, financial capital, transport hub. Samara, the jewel on the river Volga, where Saint Rose fasted thrice weekly and fed the poor and the invalid. Rose who as a young woman became even more desired for her shape than for her angelic voice as a child. Saint Rose, who smelled like fresh cut flowers and men would lust after her as she returned home from her works of charity. Men would fight in the streets over Saint Rose, who hated to be desired, and the men would cut each other's flesh at the hopes that she would stop to dress their wounds or to pray with them as their blood that smelled of vinegar soaked their shirts. After some men proposed marriage to her in the streets as she returned home from Sunday services, Saint Rose took a vow of perpetual virginity. Saint Rose the chaste, the pure, who could not stand to be desired,

became desired even more. Saint Rose, who covered her face with pepper and lye and suffered the searing burns and boils that would never heal so that she could continue to feed the hungry and the injured denizens of Samara.

In Tyumen, city of exiles, frozen city, city of the forgotten, Saint Rose came to live in solitude. Emerging from her self-imposed exile only to the flowers in her garden, receive the sacraments, or to sell her needlework, giving most of the money to the church and spending the rest on only a little stale bread and hard cheese. Saint Rose, the only woman in Russia who could make anything beautiful grow from the frozen soil of Tyumen, whose needlework and intricate embroidery grew more popular every day, became an object of desire one last time. Word spread that Saint Rose was sectioning off pieces of her beauty and selling it at market. One Sunday, as she had predicted, they came from as far away as Samara, as far off as Voronezh for a piece of Saint Rose. When the flowers and the needlework ran out they began to take pieces of her. They started with her toes. A man sliced off eight toes with a sausage knife and ran some silver thread through them in groups of four. They cut up her calloused hands and peeled the skin from her back to patch holes in their clothing. They took everything, even pieces of her wrinkled and scarred face that resembled the surface of an asteroid battered moon. Once all that was left was a small pile of cloth and bits of hair and teeth they all went back to their cities on the river, to their frozen houses, to wait for a day when another saint would be born and grace their lives with her beauty and kindness.

There is a small church in Tyumen that claims to have the skull of Saint Rose on display for members of the congregation to venerate and gaze upon. It is rumoured that upon the skull lay a crown of roses.

