

The Art of Self-Worth

Women of humble birth stand strong, it's something I've always noticed. We get knocked, jostled, elbowed and often trodden on but we dust ourselves off and we stand strong. We adapt, we reinvent and we stand square footed whilst treading deep grooves in the dust covered floor.

Becoming chronically ill and overnight losing my physical and cognitive abilities, for a long time I languished and licked my seeping wounds, tying hard to re-imagine a life. Losing every ounce of my independence knocked me flat to the ground. But there were people down there, who gently accompanied me, all of us sitting side by side, heads in laps, whispering our healing songs one gentle chapter at a time.

When I first picked up the ink pen and drew on postcards, there was joy and lightness and sweet relief. I did it for no other reason than I wanted to and then I couldn't stop riding these visual worlds. My art has grown and developed and blossomed. In the last few months I've had many surprising achievements, being so used to having very little going on apart from illness and struggle, each one feels like an oddment, a left-fielded shock to the core. But I catch them all with a resounding and colour exploding resilience, limbs stretching in a baking sun, sweat glistening, weak muscles flexing. Warm salted rain washing away the years of nothingness, being freshly born into some world anew. A cacophony of birds, exotic tendrils growing up my legs, marsupials sitting a top my head, whilst I branch my arms to pull up the others long lost for where would I be without you? For us to create new verses together whilst our dear Mother Earth holds us deeply rooted, iron-ore ablazing.

It all seems oddly surreal. For the first time in a long time I have glimmers of worth, of saying hold on I did this and under duress. And it is thanks to the power of art, from the simple act of the scratching of paper, from strands of thread quietly chosen, bits of earth held and formed with love breathed into them. Each one weaving together the markings of time, so the time past and the time to come and the time that is are all one. With dust in my hair, scabs on my knees, ink on my fingers and a cracking smile on my face - I stand feet wide, hip strong, as our women have done for generations and will for generations to come.

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