



# THE JOY OF HEALING



A ZINE BY  
— THE E.I. COMMUNITY —

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# *Soma's Letter*

“Like any other experience I’ve found traumatic, it’s been therapeutic to write about it, and actively twist a narrative of pain into one of hope, and even humour” - *Michaela Coel, Misfits: A Personal Manifesto*

Growing up, especially throughout my teenage years, I’d often write about my experiences, trauma and challenging moments. This became a crucial form of therapy for me. In the middle of the night, I’d organise my interior self. Huddled under my duvet in the darkness, I’d type up my inner thoughts and feelings on a splintered iPhone screen.

As I look back at my poetry from these years, I find that the poems evoke a strange and nostalgic feeling, like something I’d buried long ago in the very back of my subconscious. I am overwhelmed by these forgotten fragments, and transformed back into these little moments of pain, love or beauty from my youth. A cycling trip down Regent’s Canal with an old friend, the crushing feeling of rejection from a first love, picking blackberries on Hampstead Heath, birthday cakes, face paint, and a bicycle built for three. Poetry can capture a feeling or a moment and box it into a memory. In this process, I collected and synthesised the thoughts and feelings that moved me into tangible narratives. Writing and re-writing and sharing these small creations with my loved ones has helped me process and come to terms with my trauma, helping me on on my healing journey.

I do not believe that there is a one size fits all approach to healing in the aftermath of sexual violence. Every survivor is unique and will process what they’ve been through in their own way. However, I have found that many survivors find strength, solace, and healing in transforming their pain into art. We hope to platform the art of our community to encourage this process. Healing is a funny thing, it can be non-linear and it can be unpredictable, but I want to reassure you that it is possible. You can and will engage in relationships, find love, joy and fulfilment in life once again. I hope that in reading this body of work you will take strength in knowing that you are not and will never be alone.

With love as always,  
Soma

# *Ari's Letter*

Ever since I was young, I have used a creativity to materialise my thoughts and emotions. A corner of a textbook, a back of a hand or a scrap of tissue have all at some point chronicled my feelings and ideas. I joined EI in its early days and have been proud so see it blossom in to a rich community of survivors and allies alike. As some one who considers themselves to be 'creative', I felt that this approach could be incorporated in to our mission at EI. Under 'The Joy of Healing', we hope to provide a creative platform for self-expression and catharsis, and are grateful to all those who opened themselves up to us.



# Foreword

*An extract from Nobel Peace Prize winner and human rights activist,  
Dr. Denis Mukwege, from his book *The Power of Women*.*

Women and victims of sexual violence in particular have been oppressed and ignored for most of human history. Every one of us can be useful in correcting this injustice, driven not by a desire for revenge on men but by a desire for empowerment and security for all.

I dream of a society in which our mothers are recognized as the heroines they are, in which the girls born on our maternity wing are celebrated just as much as the boys, and in which women grow up without fearing violence.

I hope for a world where women have the same opportunities for professional advancement and personal joy and fulfillment as men and where political power is shared equally. I can't wait for the day when our businesses and public institutions reflect the diversity of the societies we live in. I also imagine a future when sexual assault is seen as a throwback to an earlier, more brutal era.

I believe all of this is both desirable and possible. I believe that we can all make contributions as individuals and as collectives to make it happen. I believe in the power of women.



DARKNESS AND LIGHT

TAMARA SCHWARZ

Never forget that where there is darkness there will always be light,  
There is always an end to the night,  
The morning comes and the sun rises,  
There is always an end to your pain and suffering.  
For without sorrow, we can never know joy,  
And without joy we have no reason to walk out of our pain.  
So, keep tight hold of your soul's hand,  
As it walks through the basements of hell,  
For once on the other side,  
Joy will feel all the more precious.



ELEMENTAL LOVE



ANA PALADE

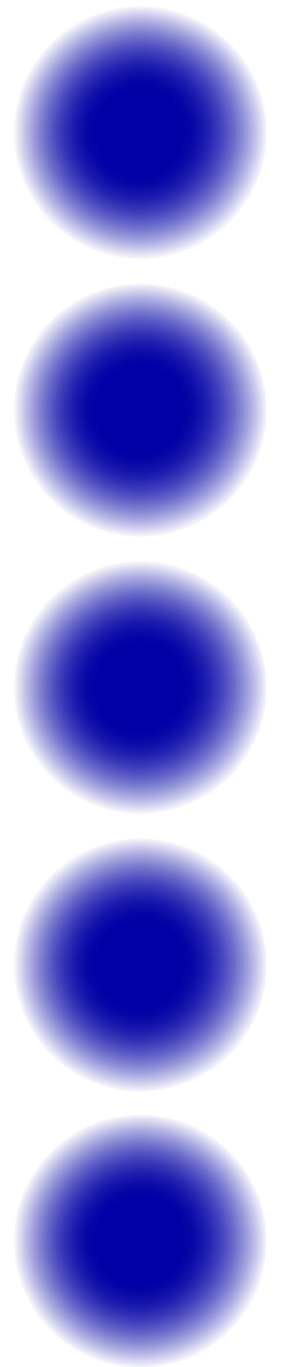
I loved a boy once upon a time  
whose name simply meant earth.  
His woven soul a part of the fabric,  
part of the living story of its creation.  
It was reflected in him,  
in the steady rhythm of his voice,  
in the calm gravity held in his gaze.  
He held the tranquil stillness of a mountain.

I loved someone once upon a time,  
whose name meant air.  
They reminded me of a dove  
or maybe a sparrow  
and when their wings spread,  
you couldn't help but be overwhelmed,  
by the beauty of the brief flight.  
They floated through my life,  
like a dandelion passing a child's eyes  
but only briefly for a few seconds,  
and then  
gone.

I loved a girl once upon a time,  
whose name meant water,  
the star of the sea.  
or rather –  
she was the jewel within the tides  
less steady than ever-changing  
less flighty than ever-evolving  
ever-moving waters sweeping up against her shores  
and then  
away she changes everyday  
while swearing the barriers being put up  
were for my own sake.  
and when I think of her sometimes I feel insignificant.  
how could I not?

when faced with an ocean so expansive,  
It's hard to not feel like she will one day swallow me,  
drown me in her waves.  
Perhaps she's already trapped me -  
was it protection or a cage?

Maybe I will one day love someone  
whose name means fire  
Perhaps they will outshine the stars  
And when they may one day come for me  
with their silver tongues of flame,  
when they seek to burn my very soul to ashes,  
I will let them unlock the cage,  
and burn the iron bars.



MY TEARS ARE  
VERY ENERGETIC

ALICE WONG



My tears are very energetic. And why shouldn't they be? Crying is restorative, warming and devastating. You cry for your own personal reasons, but when you do cry, it's energetic. Hot, fast tears are full of stories and experiences, pain and laughter.

CHANGING OF THE SEASONS

NATALIE VALLES

*Act I.*

I fell in love with winter  
With his icicles that penetrated the warmth of my soil  
With his harsh winds that rustled my bushes and left me bare  
With his blanket of snow that gave me no warmth only death  
I loved winter

*Act II.*

And then he left  
And the showers started  
Sometimes it was a torrential downpour,  
Other times it was a light sprinkle,  
But each time it was a baptism  
Come to purify this sterile ground

*Act III.*

And eventually the showers left too  
And my irises bloomed  
My tulips thrived  
My baby's breath flourished  
My garden flowered once more  
I fell in love with spring



AS GOSPEL

HANNAH DAVIS

one day i won't think about him,  
and it's going to be ok.  
i won't have to be constantly consumed  
by his voice and his name and his hands  
in order to know that it happened;  
i will take my own word, my own  
body as gospel  
and live free from his face, for one day.

one day I'm going to fall asleep,  
and it's going to be ok.  
I'm going to dream about whatever  
normal people dream about -  
maybe flying, or something like that -  
and he won't be there.  
I won't wake up  
half relieved that it wasn't real,  
and half distraught that once, it was.

one day I'm going to look in the  
mirror, and it's going to be ok.  
this one i can't really imagine.  
but it will happen one day.

one day I'll think back to where i am  
now, and i'll cry for the girl  
who yearns for the day  
when it's going to be ok.

This painting captures a calm and tender moment between two women as they share a bath. It celebrates the reclaiming of physically intimate moments in new relationships as part of the joy of healing.

VALENTINE'S DAY BATH

GWENDY





THE JOY OF HEALING

SHONA BUDDIE

Shed skin and new boned, my eyes have seen the new world. My toes dipped once before but never fully submerged and now I walk amongst brighter colours; wider smiles, with a chest like a blooming flower with every breath taken. I am gifted with a new perspective, and it feels surreal to think I was anything but this before my mouth spoke truths. No longer a dreaded weight on my body, or a clinging reptile to my spine, I have been released and beckoned by the warm Summers. From being trapped in a younger time, I now stand—knowing who I am—feeling like the adult I should have aged alongside.

ABOUT LOVE OR HATE...

IRINA NOVIKOVA



About love or hate, about what hurts or once hurt... Perhaps it will stop hurting... It's like a story of the past two hearts and a single thread... When my lips whisper in the darkness, I want a coiled snail, I want to touch the curtains and say the words, but what I don't know... it is like a small ball on a bright day, where it will burn from the fire of warm feelings.

THE HERMIT DIVES  
INTO ITS SHELL

JASMIN SIN

the hermit dives into its shell  
and sinks into the sea of her own abyss,  
the lonely blue mountains swallowing her whole  
as she fell into the green embrace of her red mind.  
the long & winding vines,  
twisting to encase her in all their glory  
as she wriggled & writhed in discomfort,  
her body filling ever so slowly  
with the wonders of her big world.

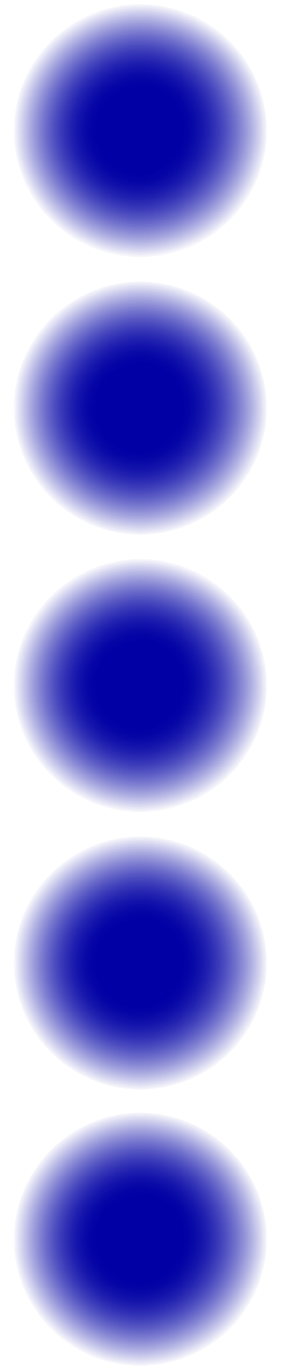
the hermit grew to antagonise  
over each and every stray branch  
until she learnt to trace the patterns on the leaves;  
to follow the pace at which they spread themselves across her body;  
to identify the tiny thorns hidden in the sides of their frame;  
until finally

she came undone

she crawled  
with all her energy  
she crawled  
from the depths of her solitude  
she crawled  
from under the cage of her misery  
she crawled

until finally  
she reached the surface once again

the hermit dove into her shell  
and sunk into the sea of her own abyss,  
the vast blue mountains held her close,  
and as she fell into the amber warmth of her own body,  
her heart filled ever so slowly  
with the wonders of her small little planet,  
dreaming of her new earthly lease.  
she woke with ease.  
relishing in the peace of her clarity,  
unsullied by the scars of doubt and envy,  
soul searched as a white lily.



NOTE TO SELF

ALICE CAMPBELL



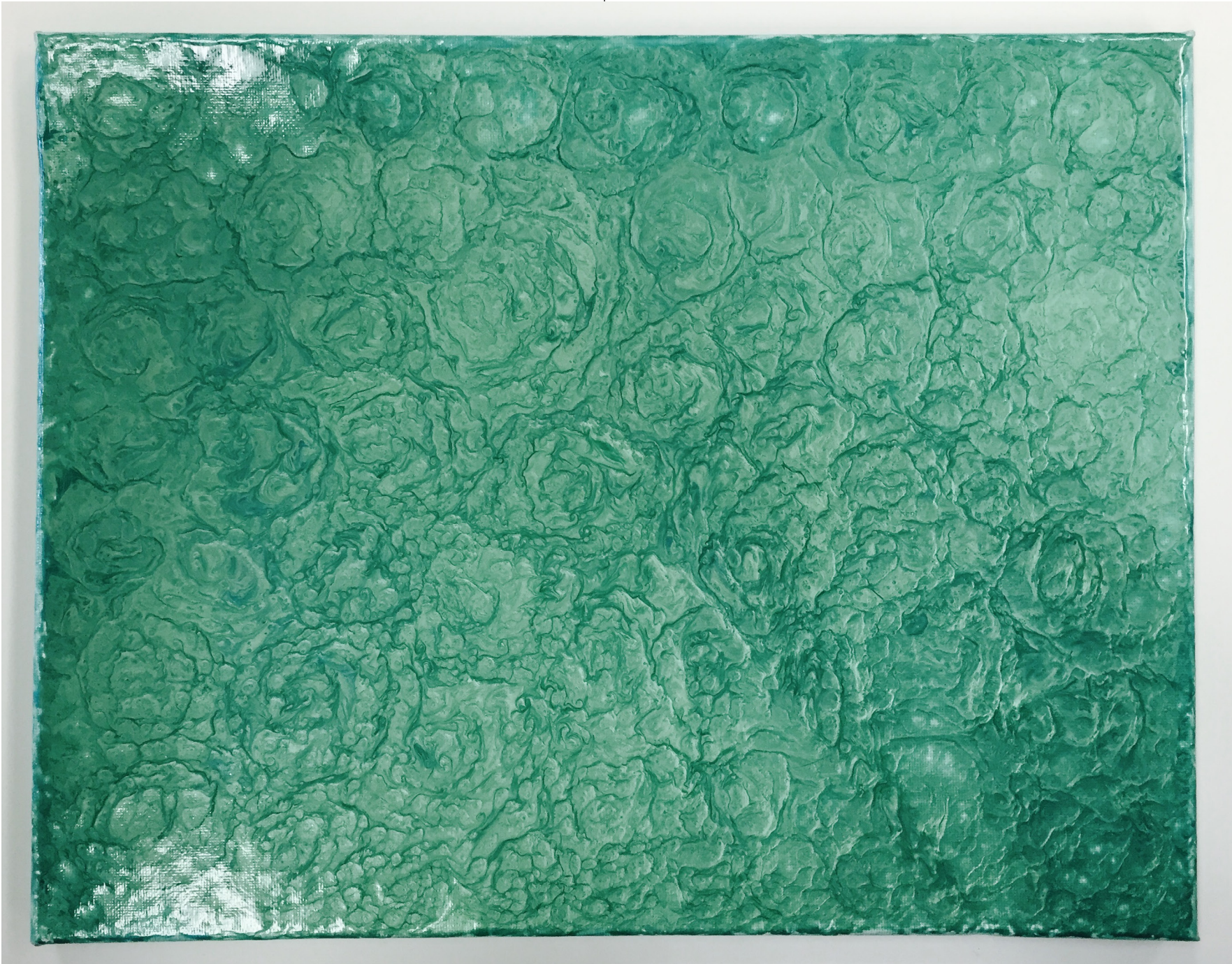
This piece is a reminder to thank myself for all the work I've put into my healing. I often thank my loved ones and friends for all their support and forget to thank myself. I did this all- every little (or big) step in my recovery I can claim as my own. This is a reminder for everyone- thank yourself! Healing can be just as joyous and blissful as this painting!

I created this piece when I was a teenager, during an extremely difficult point in my life — now in my twenties, this artwork holds so much more significance for me than ever. I always loved going outdoors and being surrounded by nature, as it is where I felt the most at peace. However, growing older has exposed me to numerous situations in which I have been made to feel unsafe outside: for what I wear, for where I go, for when I am alone. I look forward to the day that future generations of womxn are no longer forced to feel fearful when walking by themselves, are no longer followed when trying to get home and are no longer told that it is “their own fault”.

I do not wish to live in fear forever — I want the freedom to do what I want when I want. I liken the notion of freedom to water (which this piece mimics), something which is freely-flowing and unconstrained no matter its given environment. I can only help that one day I may be as carefree as I used to be.

JOY

JORDAN CALLES

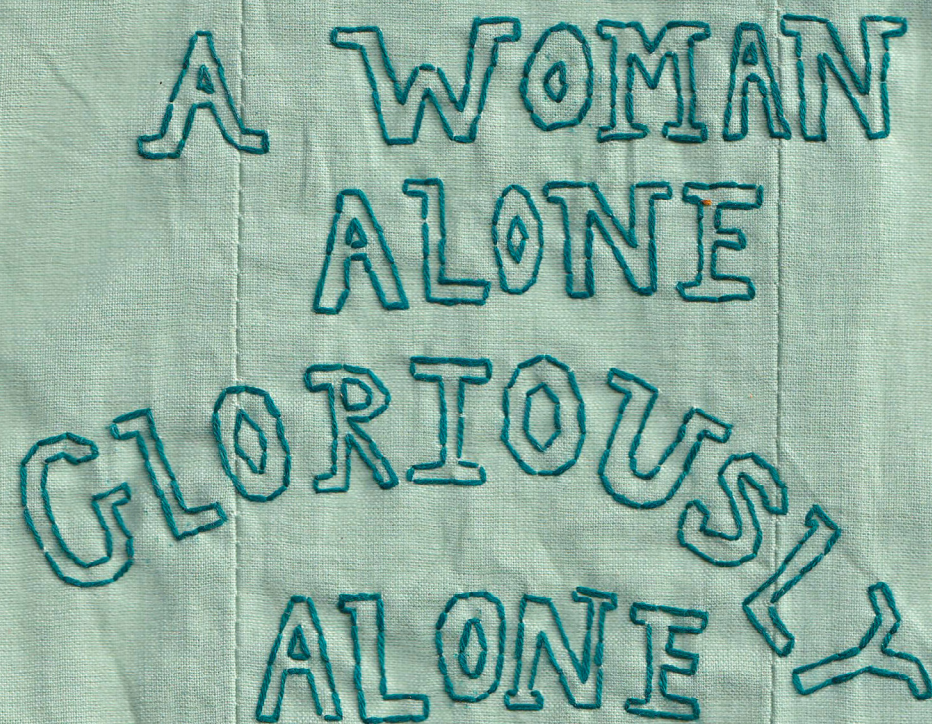


A WOMAN ALONE,  
GLORIOUSLY ALONE

ALICE WONG

Being alone has so many forms, and for me, being alone is reflective, calming and emotional. For some people, being alone is a step forward within the healing process. As a woman, I have been told to never be alone; to never walk home alone or to never live alone for security reasons. Women are also told to never be romantically alone, otherwise you live a sad, unmarried, unloved life. I reclaim the act of being alone, I make it glorious because it is! To be alone is not to be lonely, to be alone is to be confident, content and should be a celebration (only if you like being alone. If you do not, then be gloriously accompanied) .

Things I do alone: eat, walk, laugh, read, write, cry, sew, draw, sing, clean, stretch, learn, dress, mend, make, organise, swim, ride, stride, sit, lie, stroke, sleep and wake up.



A WOMAN  
ALONE  
GLORIOUSLY  
ALONE

## THE JOY OF HEALING

FATIMA MORI

Throughout our life, we often bump into different challenges— managing to get out that first laugh, to walk or talk. Soon enough, we're trying to not fall from our bicycles or we're struggling with that test.

As with many things in life, everyone's experiences are unique. I may not cry watching Dumbo, but I do cry every time I'm feeling stressed and find the moon in between the clouds of the night. You may handle everything differently, or maybe you've healed.

I was fourteen when I read an amazing writer who referred to these challenges, experiences, as scars— and I don't think there's a more beautiful way to describe it.

A couple of months ago I learned what loss is, up-close. Boy did I embark myself on a journey! I've met people who have not lost someone, but something— they've lost time, a feeling, or that part of themselves which they loved the most. They've lost the trust and hope they had for this Earth.

But, you see. Some days are pitch black, horrible, never-ending, yes. There always will be. Yet, there's SO much more. You haven't met that person who'll bring you- or teach you- what happiness and living are. You have yet to fall in love with that city or try that mouth-watering dessert. Listen to that song, dance freely, meet face to face with that drawing, cook, feel, see, meet, be.

*Love.*

I promise you, there's so much love out there. I think that's what made me sit and write this for you and myself, to remind ourselves of everything we had seen before and we've forgotten about.

Scars are born with a fall or a cut. Your skin quickly acquires this flaming red and you feel nothing more than blinding pain. I, personally, cry every time it happens. But, it is a scar. The first couple of days (weeks, months, years) it'll hurt... a lot. Yet, before you know it, it's going to start drying up and you will have a little bump of skin that will remind you that you managed to get through it all. That it healed.

*You healed.*

I guess what I'm trying to say is, it's worth it. Despite the pain, tears, and screams, when you get to the top of the hill, breathing's more beautiful, the blue sky suddenly seems magical and you find yourself filled with joy. Joy in yourself, and in healing.

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