

I'M RISING

Michelle G. Stradford

Determined. Confident. Powerful.

I came back
to gather up
my original whole self
my unyoked wildness
before my zest
was stripped away
Where free will
was broken out of me
My badass spirit
beaten down
so that I could be
directed and coaxed
to do your bidding
silenced and obedient
while you rode me
Take note
I'm back running free
living loud
Sprinting through life
unbridled and
Unbroken

Unbroken

I'm Rising

You stole my natural born
Trusting innocence
But not my memory of it
I sealed up the hurt
And use this unjust
To help others heal
I work hard
And thrive
I choose forward
That is where Life is

Life is Forward

I have zero tolerance
For those who expect all
Yet offer nothing
When a NO person enters my life
Looking to use me
Exploit my kindness
Challenge my values
And prey upon my goodness
I stop them in their tracks
Swiftly jettison them
To the exit
Back door, side or front
Just out of my trajectory
Clearing the path for
All the YES people
Destined to alter my life
At the prescribed time
That they are needed most
To share in my journey
To greatness

Just No

I'm Rising

Ripping off the scabs
of deep hardened
distorted scars
Skin long thickened
from the repeated
slaps in the face
I've transformed
I'm full-grown audacious
No, I won't be backing down
Committed to whatever the cause
Not ashamed of the thorns
in my crown
No challenge too great
No obstacle so tall
I will triumph
Just as I have before
I am a warrior
After all

Warrior

Swallowing hard
to hold anxiety in check
feeds its growth
not mine
I opened my mouth and
regurgitated
the colony of lies
that lined my gut

Gut Check

Not holding back
is new for me
Loving my quirks
embracing my crazy
has emboldened me
I'll never again
be that
invisible she
Yeah, I'm really
feeling this decidedly
remarkable me
Recite in the mirror
and repeat
I got this
Hello New She

The New She (or He)

My obsessively active mind
zooms in and out of clarity
entrapping logic inside
of an impervious pale fog
through which I squint to see
my fingers trembling
as I pull my jacket tighter
to still these body shakes
chilled by cold droplets
diving from my forehead
into a raging river of angst
and throbbing pulsations
that I just can't stop
until I breathe deep
and exhale slowly
then repeat again
and again
until I convert
this agitated energy
into action
It's over
I'm good

The Panic

I'm Rising

I was broken
and tired of hiding
When finally
I held up the mirror
to peer at my
fractured parts
and saw that
pain and struggle
had not twisted me
into something angry
unrecognizable
and hideous
But into a courageous
bolder, and more
formidable me

Formidable

Michelle G. Stradford

*Some call them
the extended kin
They stabilize my center
Are my healing balm
I delight in
their juxtaposed blend
of chaotic energy
An undercurrent of quiet calm
Only here do I find
constancy and comfort
Always at home in my skin*

Gatherings

She longed to soar
Higher still
Accomplish more
Transport herself
Transform the world
On iron wings
Built for life's brutal forces
Its' turbulent wind shear
Already tested
Untethered without fear
So, she left the comfort
The easy
The known
Took the hard leap
And grew some

Iron Wings