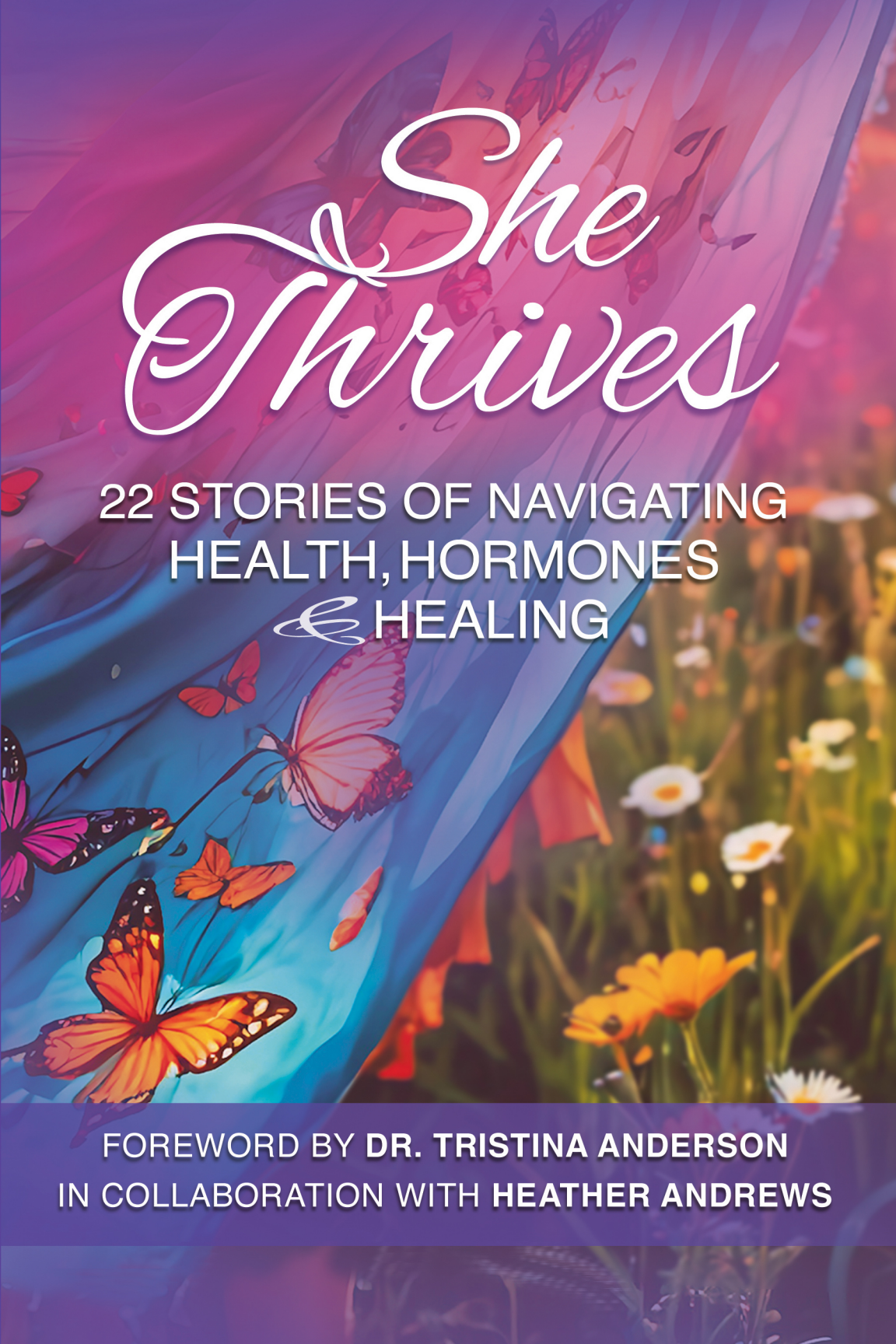




She Thrives

22 STORIES OF NAVIGATING
HEALTH, HORMONES
& HEALING

FOREWORD BY **DR. TRISTINA ANDERSON**
IN COLLABORATION WITH **HEATHER ANDREWS**

Jennifer Robin



Jennifer Robin is a survivor, storyteller, and strategist of the soul. A former justice official who served in war zones and courtrooms, she now devotes her life to healing—through words, touch, and truth. After surviving breast cancer, surgical menopause, and a devastating mental health crisis, Jennifer rebuilt her life from the inside out.

Her work has been published internationally in *Wildfire*, *Lust Zine*, and the bestselling anthology, *Echoes of Wisdom*. She writes and speaks with fierce vulnerability on trauma, depression, sex, sovereignty, and self-love—not as buzzwords, but as battle-tested tools for survival.

Jennifer is also a massage therapist, coach, and advocate for post-surgical scar healing, especially for breast cancer survivors and trans clients. She lives in Calgary, Alberta, where she is building a life that's both a sanctuary and a resistance.

She believes in softness as strength, and flowers as proof.



Connect with Jennifer:

linktr.ee/TheBlissPoint



Fighting Like a Flower

By Jennifer Robin

*F*or anyone succumbing to the voice of their depression: call it out, and then call it in.

I'd been back from Afghanistan for about three years when I started to hear the voice of my depression.

Maybe it was the silence—no more bombs, no more rockets, no more tanks or base construction. Just long drives to and from work, alone.

Alone enough that my brain finally had time to process everything it had seen, everything it had buried.

The first words she said to me were quiet but heavy:

“I’m sad.”

“I’m sad all the way to my bones.”

“I’m so, so sad.”

It wasn’t the kind of sadness you cry out and get on with your day. It was the kind that hollowed you out. The kind of sadness that wrapped its fingers around your will to live and whispered, softly, daily, that maybe it’d be easier to just... let go.

I remember saying to someone—someone living with chronic pain and a complex medical diagnosis, someone who fought for their life every single day—

“If I got cancer, I don’t even know if I’d fight.”

She didn’t scold me. She just tilted her head. A quiet, neutral stare. But in her silence, I saw something that unsettled me. It wasn’t judgment; it was truth.

Because that’s the voice of a depressed woman.

That’s the voice of someone who, even in the face of another person’s fierce fight for life, can’t imagine choosing her own.

Call out your depression.

I didn’t. Not at first.

And when I got my cancer diagnosis, the first thought that hit me was:

Oh my God. I entertained the voice of my depression for so long that my body complied.

It felt like a betrayal. My body had been listening. And it believed me.

So, there it was: my life, ending.

Not with a bang, but with the slow collapse of someone who didn’t know if they were worth saving.

A colleague who’d walked their own cancer path told me something that changed me:

“Let go of the work. Someone else will pick it up. But you—your wound is gaping, and you need to go take care of yourself. There’s never a satisfying time to leave a broken system. But no one gets to their deathbed and says, ‘I wish I’d worked more tomorrow.’”

That haunted me.

So did my own thoughts.

One night, in that treacherous void between diagnosis and test results, between biopsies and treatment plans, I asked myself:

“What would I regret on my deathbed?”

And the answer came fast and furious:

“That I didn’t fuck enough.”

Not performative sex. Not duty sex. Not perform-for-his-pleasure sex.

Glee sex. For-me sex. Fuck-myself-back-to-life sex.

I had started studying tantra to save my marriage.

Turns out, I was studying tantra to save myself.

My weight loss journey?

Endless.

But the part where I started to turn a corner? That was two years before anyone else could see it.

I was in a medical trial for people with Type 2 diabetes. I spent a full year in bariatric surgery school—not just to qualify, but to unlearn.

To unlearn addiction transfer. To create real support systems. To train my family. To reprogram my own mind.

I monitored everything. Tracked every meal. Assessed my behaviors with forensic precision. I knew this wasn’t just about body fat—it was about reclaiming myself from years of abandonment.

No, tantra didn’t save the marriage.

But it helped to end it with grace.

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And more importantly, it helped me reinhabit a body I had spent a lifetime dissociating from. A body that had once been nothing more than a battlefield, a vessel of duty, a source of shame.

Tantra didn't just give me tools.

It gave me sensation. It gave me presence. It gave me permission.

It gave me back to myself.

Here's the truth most people don't know: I got tested three times to make sure I really wanted to live.

Cancer was the first test.

COVID was the second.

Consent violation was the third—a soul-deep reckoning that stripped me bare in the dark night of my healing.

And then came the quiet killer: the death-by-a-thousand-cuts reality of life as a woman.

Because let's be honest...

The moment a woman enters a relationship, her risk of intimate partner violence increases.

The moment a woman speaks, she risks being silenced.

The moment a woman thrives, she threatens a system designed to shrink her.

There has never been anything—or anyone—who posed more danger to me... than me.

And I say that not as poetry, but as someone who worked in the courts. Someone who understands what it means to be a “risk to self or others.”

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Someone who knows how people get committed. How they get dismissed. How they get disappeared.

I've been my own abusive partner.

And you can't divorce yourself.

So instead, I began the long journey of repair.

Of rebuilding.

Of relearning how to be a safe place for myself.

The surgeons did their work.

Now I had to do mine.

I'm actually grateful for my years in law enforcement and criminal justice.

Because it taught me to assess from multiple angles.

It taught me to hold evidence and uncertainty in the same breath.

And it helped me see that my decision to survive cancer wasn't heroic.

It was tactical.

I chose a radical surgery because I knew myself.

I knew the depth of my depression.

I knew my body's threshold for pain and my brain's intolerance for drawn-out trauma.

So, I opted for a path that would eliminate the need for prolonged treatment.

Less chemo. Less radiation. More certainty.

Not because I was brave.

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Because I was smart.

Because I wanted a chance.

Because I finally decided I was worth the strategy.

There was a night when death knocked on my door.

It had already brushed past me three times. But this time, it was standing there holding two exits, one in each hand.

And I said to myself:

“Pick one.”

It wasn't a cry for help.

It wasn't a performance.

It was a quiet, final conversation.

The pain I was in—physical, emotional, spiritual—was worse than anything I had ever endured. It wasn't a spike. It was a sustained burn.

But then something ancient rose inside me. Something wise and feral and fierce.

It whispered:

“Not today. I'll take your card. Good to know you're out there. But I'm sticking with who I got right now.”

And I turned myself down.

Not out of guilt. Not out of fear.

Out of love.

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Out of reverence for the wild animal inside me that said, “If we go, we go our way. With dignity. With choice. With our head held high.”

Like a farm dog who crawls under the porch to die on its own terms.

But the wild thing in me said:

“Not yet.”

So, I made a deal with myself:

“You’ve got thirty days. If things don’t change, if hope doesn’t return, we’ll choose one of the exits. No shame. Just done.”

And I agreed.

But then something curious happened:

I didn’t notice the thirty days go by.

I just kept... living.

Delaying.

Distracting.

Just like when I quit smoking.

Delay. Delay. Delay.

What if...

What if I tried something different?

What if I made a new choice?

What if I was wrong about everything I thought was true?

Could I enjoy life again?

Maybe for the first time?

So, I kept reaching.

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And even though I felt like a pansy—literally—fragile, wind-whipped, barely holding on...

I kept blooming.

It wasn't cute.

It wasn't linear.

But it was real.

My roots are deep now.

My reach is high.

And I am fucking beautiful.

And if you can't see it?

Let me remind you:

If beauty is in the eye of the beholder, then so is ugliness.

So yes—

I'm still fighting.

Fighting like a flower.

And every day I wake up, I choose that moment at the door.

I choose life.

Not because I have to.

Because I get to.

Because the wild part of me still says:

“Not yet.”

Epilogue: Headquarters

There’s one more piece I need to tell you.

My ovaries were removed without my full, informed consent. In a moment where I should have had the space to grieve, reflect, and choose, the decision was made for me. A unilateral call about my body that changed everything. And that was wrong.

What followed wasn’t just surgical menopause—it was a freefall into a hormonal abyss. And no one prepared me for that. No one told me that taking away estrogen and progesterone would be like pulling the scaffolding out from under my mind.

And in that spiral, I wanted to die.

But I need you to hear me when I say this:

Wanting to die with dignity is not a crime. It is not a sin. It is not a moral failing. It is a whisper of self-compassion in the storm.

I had to work hard—so hard—to forgive myself for that moment. That moment when I crossed an internal threshold, when I tagged myself as a danger to self and others.

Untrustworthy. Unlovable. Unstable.

I internalized that label like a tattoo I didn’t ask for. And it scarred me more deeply than any scalpel.

PTSD is real. Psychosis is real. Mental illness is not a metaphor—it is a lived reality. And our society still refuses to look it in the eye.

I have worked in high-level everything: international war zones, courtroom strategy, federal policing, and national security.

Let me tell you—if HQ is sick, everything else collapses.

And our mind? That’s Headquarters.

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Take care of your mind. Watch your mental diet. What are you consuming? What are you digesting? What are you holding onto?

I have worked alongside soldiers in war, police dismantling trafficking rings, and judges making irreversible decisions. I have seen things in court that still haunt me.

But in the darkest night of my own soul, no one could save me.

Because the enemy was me.

And that's why I tout self-love so loudly.

Not the soft, fluffy kind.

The kind that is forged in fire.

The kind that looks in the mirror and says: "I choose you. I won't abandon you. Not again."

Because no one can come and save you if you don't love yourself enough to stay. To keep fighting. To crawl, if you must.

I didn't survive because someone else gave me a reason. I survived because I became the reason.

And if you're reading this?

You're not alone.

You are Headquarters.

Protect the command center.

With everything you've got.

Becoming Your Own Bunker

There are moments when the world doesn't feel safe. When no one can reach you. That's when you must become your own bunker. Not to shut out life—but to shelter the most sacred parts of you until the storm passes.

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Self-care isn't bubble baths and pedicures when you're in crisis. It's emergency medicine. It's identifying the exits. It's triaging your soul. It's knowing how to stop the emotional bleed.

It's keeping a go-bag packed for your mind: music that grounds you, a voice memo from your stronger self, a note that says, "*We've survived this before. Breathe.*"

You don't need to be heroic every day.

But you do need a bunker.

A place inside yourself where you remember: *This is not the end. This is the emergency. And we are trained for this.*

Protect yourself. Preserve yourself.

Because survival is sacred.

And you are worth the rescue.

Just one more thing...

If a flower can push through concrete because of its will to live, so can I. Even if I am a pansy-ass. Because fragile doesn't mean weak. And blooming doesn't require permission.

She Thrives

Navigating Health, Hormones, and Healing unites the voices of **22 women** who share stories of resilience and renewal. From emotionally abusive relationships to being dismissed by healthcare professionals, from menopause and mental health struggles to grief, financial hardship, and adapting to life with epilepsy—their journeys reveal the obstacles women face every day.

In a world overflowing with knowledge and wisdom, it seems insane that women must still advocate so fiercely for themselves in healthcare just to get the support they need for their mental and physical well-being. That reality is exactly why *She Thrives* was created.

Alongside these stories, health advocates and practitioners provide **tools, insights, and strategies** to help women reclaim their power, navigate their health with confidence, and thrive.

This book is both an inspiring testament to perseverance and a practical guide for women determined not just to survive—**but to thrive**.

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