

A Limitless Life in a Powerless World

Lisa Marie Runfolo

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Lisa Marie Runfolo's uplifting memoir *A Limitless Life in a Powerless World* concerns overcoming challenges, passivity, and dependence.

Runfolo's childhood was pleasant. She was given opportunities to feel grown up even at a young age; her parents allowed her and her slightly older cousin to spend Saturdays shopping on their own. Her young adulthood was busy with work, college, and a summer-long trip to Europe, where her purse was stolen. Later, she entered into a stifling marriage with a controlling husband. She came to realize that love was not enough; her marriage was limiting her. A civilized divorce followed.

Runfolo explains how her troubles helped her become able to make her own choices. While going through a divorce was grueling, it led to a second marriage that was based on an equal partnership. She moved abroad with her new husband, and the challenges of living in a new country also gave her strength.

Runfolo admits to poor choices at times, her narration honest with the hope of showing that mistakes can be learned from. Self-help components work into her memoir: at the end of each chapter come supportive questions that encourage the audience to reflect on their choices and troubles, too. Runfolo's own methods include faith and prayers, but also self-reliance, journaling, and thorough self-analysis. The text encourages the search for "Aha" moments, or epiphanies that lead to self-improvement, with the example of Runfolo's biggest epiphany receiving a chapter's coverage: when she was thirty-seven, she recognized patterns of control and dependency in her life that needed to be eliminated.

The book moves with tension and speed, covering calm moments with concision and devoting more space to detailing hard ones, including personal health challenges and her ex-husband's terminal illness. Dramatic and heartfelt, the writing contains some clear images: Runfolo meeting her future second husband is described as a "pixie dust" juncture, for example, that made everything around her brighter and clearer, while Runfolo's daughter's health problems are reflected through her "spark and inner strength" and become an opportunity to grow. Some incorrect word choices flatten the book's ideas, though, and much of the text is straightforward and familiar in its terminology.

A compact but powerful self-analysis of becoming independent and thriving, *A Limitless Life in a Powerless World* is a motivational memoir whose accounts of overcoming obstacles combine with suggestions for others to do the same.

JILL BEAUCHAMP (August 7, 2020)

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