



Let Me Have My Say: This Is Who I Am

Rima Jbara

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Let Me Have My Say is a memoir-through-dialogues that's full of wisdom, highlighting the importance of self-respect in human relationships.

Inquisitive artist Rima Jbara wrote *Let Me Have My Say*, a memoir about navigating relationships with people who misunderstand her work.

Comprised of a series of short conversations with people including Jbara's father, friends, and lovers, the book's chapters are sorted by theme. Conversations about love are grouped in one section, while those about family are placed in another. Each exchange is less than a page long; together, the conversations round out a sense of Jbara's struggles and beliefs around the topic. The chapters build upon one another in a cohesive way to shape the book's themes and to express Jbara's worldview.

The book's content is intelligent and wise, as in the balance achieved in its discussions of romantic relationships: Jbara wonders whether it is more important to have a partner with whom she shares interests, or one who is empathetic and respectful. Her conclusion is seen as she distances herself from a partner who disrespects her work as a sculptor, despite him being smart, wealthy, and hardworking.

Most of those to whom Jbara speaks do not understand the way that she lives or why she does what she does; some ask questions in an attempt to grow in understanding, while others seem content to maintain their stubborn perspectives. The sum result of these conversations is Jbara's sense that it is better to live life as she pleases, rather than focusing on what others think.

Quotation marks are used in an inconsistent way, while misspellings and punctuation mistakes are pervasive. Dialogue tags are rare; when they are used, they contain too many adverbs, none of which clarify how words are spoken. Ambiguity about who is speaking confuses the text; a remark within a conversation highlights a belief that the content of a conversation matters more than the other participant in it.

Jbara's voice is distinct; she comes across as self-aware and confident about what she knows, needs, and wants. Even amid concerns that she is selfish or stubborn, she is sympathetic. Those she speaks to, however, are dimensionless, without personality traits outside of those that surround the purpose of their conversations.

Self-referential sections and direct addresses to the audience are differently styled, though still set in quotation marks. These deviations from the book's general form are entertaining.

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AIMEE JODOIN (October 14, 2019)

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