



## The Rhythm of My Life: Tuning into the Rocky Rhythm of Fire: Memoirs of a Haitian Immigrant, Romance, and Development of Inner Strength

**Yvon Milien**

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*Themes of perseverance and positivity infuse this ranging memoir.*

Themes of external malevolence—be it from voodoo curses or hateful individuals—suffuse Yvon Milien's memoir *The Rhythm of My Life*, all matched by his determination to overcome such struggles with religion, philosophy, and education.

Born in Haiti in the 1960s, Milien grew up in a culture where voodoo was used as a tool for healing—and for revenge. He asserts that he was harmed by voodoo curses and that they were what split him up from his girlfriend. Nonetheless, he moved to the United States and attained several master's degrees, all while his yearning for love haunted him.

The memoir also follows his religious progression, showing how he went from Haitian voodoo to being a Jehovah's Witness to Mormonism, finding a personal belief system that draws wisdom from numerous religious texts, including the Bhagavad Gita and Buddhist teachings. And as he moves from Haiti to Utah to New York, he recalls his personal and professional struggles as an immigrant in the US.

The book's own flow is slow to develop. Topics jump, from a childhood illness into the discovery that a family member filled an entirely different role, with little sense of clear transition. Scenes from Milien's early life are muddled. Once the book leaves his childhood, it becomes more linear, and his growing philosophical understandings are easy to follow.

For much of the book, Milien's love life takes center stage. Its depictions of women are often disconcerting, focusing on physical appearances and so-called wishy-washy behavior, while also hinting at a history of cheating on the narrator's part that is not examined. High-maintenance women are bemoaned for causing much stress. Somewhat expectedly, an ex-girlfriend returns at the end of the book, and the refreshed relationship is directed by faith more than tempestuousness: Milien would "let God's current lead [him] wherever it was flowing instead of trying to interfere."

Some sections aim to deliver wise words and maxims that end up reading as unclear. Awkward metaphors and esoteric language are used to comment on "real love" and the "lower ego," but these notions don't connect to the surrounding material. Other notions are more pertinent, such as "It takes guts to recognize the wrongs we have done to others" and Milien's decision to always think before speaking.

*The Rhythm of My Life* is a memoir that jumps from frustrations in love to personal spiritual development, championing perseverance and positivity all the way.

AIMEE JODOIN (June 10, 2019)

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