



Unfinished: A Personal Journey of Healing, Self-Discovery and Resilience

Isana

FriesenPress (Mar 4, 2016)

Softcover \$19.99 (354pp)

978-1-4602-6818-6

This raw and tender memoir celebrates one woman's ability to transcend difficult circumstances and forge a life of meaning.

A testament to the strength of the human spirit, Isana's *Unfinished: A Personal Journey of Healing, Self-Discovery and Resilience* traces a woman's struggle to learn how to love and honor herself despite a childhood marked by physical and emotional abuse.

The youngest of four children, Isana—a self-chosen name that celebrates the author's strong nature—grew up in a troubled home lead by extremely conservative Christian parents. Fear-based sermons and punishment with leather straps were common, and dancing, movies, smoking, and alcohol were forbidden.

Isana came to see God as wrathful and punishing, and she suffered from terror-filled nightmares. Devalued by her mother, and abused by one of her brothers and forbidden to tell anyone, her cries for help were ignored. She believed that she was worthless and that her needs did not matter.

As other people in whom she placed her trust also abused her, including her father, who forced his kisses upon her, Isana's hurt and shame became an intense, deep-rooted anger. Feeling that she was unlike other children, she took solace in nature, and her love of the outdoors served her well as she became a competitive long-distance runner.

Isana's memoir is raw, angry, wise, and tender as she traces the events of her life from childhood through maturity. She shows how cycles of abuse, inappropriate behavior, ridicule, and lack of respect can repeat through generations, making it difficult for women such as herself to discover their true value.

Insightful and honest, Isana writes of her dysfunctional family, failed relationships, self-abuse through excessive demands on her body, on-the-job harassment while serving as a police officer, and finally, of finding a trustworthy man who loved and honored her.

The writing is clear, expressive, and to the point, and the story is fast paced and engaging. Some may find the graphic descriptions disturbing, including that of the discovery of a man who had shot himself; however, such moments serve to vividly bring the scenes, and the author's feelings about them, to life.

The book's hopeful epilogue celebrates Isana's new ability to protect her own inner child, "the feisty one, the scrapper ... the one who wouldn't back down." *Unfinished* honors that sensitive little girl, still alive within the author, whose greatest desire was to be accepted and loved for who she was.

KRISTINE MORRIS (June 13, 2016)

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