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**How to Thrive
AS A WOMAN LEADER
in a still Patriarchal Society**



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Foreword

This book is dedicated to all women out there. Regardless of color, age, religion, etc. I am writing this book in a vulnerable context for me. This month I turned 36, an age at which one of my grandmothers chose to leave the earth tragically. I chose to be reborn.

In memory of her and all the women from my family tree who lived before me on whose shoulders I stand today.

This book was born from 2 ideas:

I strongly believe that there is a hero in each woman in this world. A `shero`, we just need to see it

In my journey, I delve into these layers of internal resistance, exploring the nuances of leadership beyond the evident hurdles. Join me in uncovering the intricate dance between societal expectations and the silent battles fought within, as we navigate the path to empowerment and visibility.

Introduction

I was born in a modest family in a small town in Romania. The second of 5 children, the rest only boys. Most people, when they hear this, tell me that I must have been the most pampered in the whole family. And to a small extent, I was... in kindergarten. At least that's what I'm told.

It's just that things felt differently for me. I was forgotten in kindergarten by my father, and I thought I would die without him. I asked for a Barbie doll, I got a wooden doll that didn't move its hands.

The highlight was, that I saw my older brother getting exactly what he asked for: an HC '95, the beloved sneakers.

Adults always scared me, especially because they were always agitated, nervous, and noisy. I withdrew into myself; I was running away from interactions with my aunts and uncles. The only one who brought me a little comfort was my older brother, except that he ran away from me all the time because he didn't like being a babysitter.

I was 6 years old when my mother sat down on the armchair in the living room crying and telling me that this was the day when we would behave differently. My father found God and chose to go to a congregation. Thus, we will have to take off our earrings and any jewelry, throw away the radio, the cassette player (that's how it was back then), the television, and all the paintings in the house.

I was no longer allowed to play with the children.

I was extremely confused. I didn't understand anything that was happening. There were arguments

in the house before, but after this event, they intensified.

One day, I was walking with my childhood friend on the sidewalk near the block where I lived, and I recognized my broken TV. There, on the field, I started to cry. I realized that I would no longer be able to watch the shows with fairytales or the Encyclopaedia that I liked so much on Saturday evening.

I had no way of knowing that this moment of sadness would turn into years of torment and suffering.

I was seven years old when my third brother was born. Throughout her pregnancy, my mom was terrified that she would die. Her biological mother died at 36, exactly the age my mother gave birth. I was terrified about her not being around. So, I would sometimes come to her and check her breathing when

she was asleep only to see if she was still with me. I think that was the time when high levels of stress started to flood my brain.

My father has no drive to take care of any of us. His only job is to go to work and bring money, at least that was saying. And not that much money anyway.

That year I started my first year of school. I had to walk with a scarf over my head, was not allowed to talk to anyone, not allowed to take part in any trip with the class or any activity whatsoever.

At least not officially. My mom would find some money and sometimes send me away with the class on small trips that were happening in the city, like a museum. Otherwise without my father knowing.

At seven years old, I started to have a double life. One to show my father and one for my mother. My desires, hopes and dreams had no room in this life.

Go to school, come home, do the dishes, take care of your brother, do the homework, clean the house, pray to God, and follow my father at his congregation. This was never room for debate. MANDATORY.

At the congregation, I was all the time scared. There was a big room, with wood benches, with one aisle: on the left the men's side, on the right women's side. The presbyter would talk in the beginning, they would all sing different songs and then pray all the time loudly, with different voices, and different tones. Sometimes people would start to walk on their knees and speak in incomprehensible words. Everybody would say that they received grace from God and that is the language of God.

I was completely terrified, my father would oversee me like a hawk to see if I made the right moves, if I sang, if I prayed. And if he wasn't, the ladies around me would push me in my ribs not to fall behind.

My father would most of the time tell me to pray and glorify God through songs because I was a sinner by birth because I am a woman. And hell will devour me like it did with Eve, due to her biting the apple in Heaven's Garden.

And he kept pushing me to all of these, it didn't matter that I was exhausted because my younger brother cried all night and kept me awake. It didn't matter that I was exhausted due to all the hard work as a kid in the house because he would not lift a finger to help my mom. It would not matter that I had a hard time at school.

It started to form in my little brain the idea that I did not matter.

I was telling my mom all the time that this is not right. But she kept telling me that he was my father and I needed to respect him.

And the older I got, the worse it got.

Because two more brothers come along. For me to take care of while my mom and dad were at work.

But in the meantime, when I was about 10 or 11, he told me I needed to start behaving like a woman. To have long skirts all the time, long sleeves and to wear the scarf over my hand day in, day out. He knew I wouldn't take this very well. He started to secretly follow me around to see if I obeyed.

He knew that the minute he left, I would throw away the scarf and if possible, the skirt too.

I was living in a constant state of stress. Not to be caught playing with my friends, not to be caught without the scarf. He even followed me at school.

One time, I failed to notice him in time so I could add fast the scarf, and he saw me. At that moment, I did not recognize my father. We were in the middle of the courtyard at school. I was barely walking towards

him because my feet were trembling, I could barely breathe and I thought I was about to die.

He was beyond furious; he was like a rabid animal.

He only asked me why I did this to him, and then he slapped me in front of all my colleagues. I was beaten before by him, slapped, hair pulled, and pushed, but I knew that this time something was different. I think he was angry because it was so public.

He always thought `what would people say?`

He told me to go home because we will discuss when he will be back from his gathering. My brothers were alone, so someone had to be home.

I still can't remember how I got back home, but all the time I spent waiting for him, all I could think of was `he is going to kill me.`

My mom was at work that night, so there was no one to defend me against this monster that came out of my father.

He came home later and asked me why I did this. All he had in his mind was that I was humiliating him in front of the world. It did not matter what I was saying. That I don't like to dress like that, that kids are making fun of me, that some girl threw rocks at me.

Nooo, my feelings did not matter, my thoughts, my whole being belonged to him. I had to obey whatever he said.

While discussing, he noticed that he could not find his wide belt with a big buckle with Jerusalem. He got that I had hidden it and, because I would not say where it was, he took a foot off a broken chair and started to beat me with it. I barely remember being able to write at school for a couple of days and I still have some scars on my back from that night.