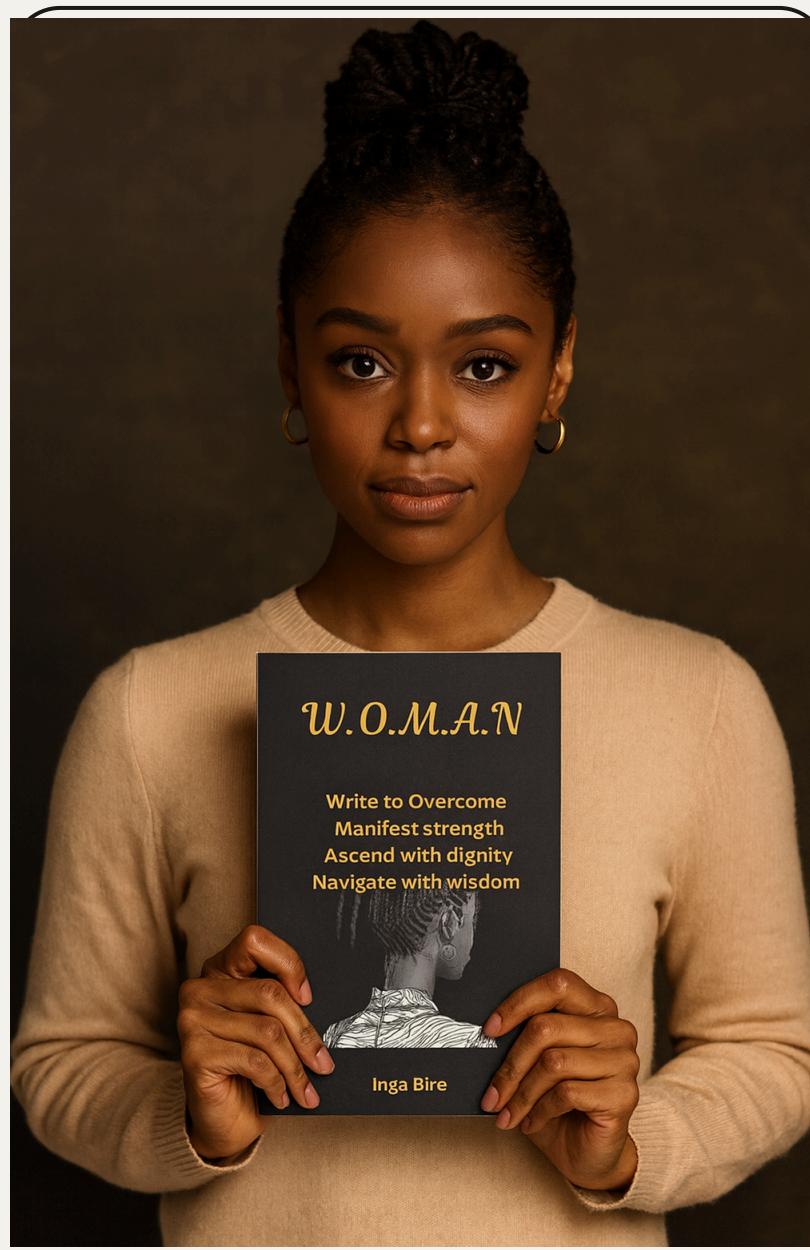


Free chapter

AN UNEXPECTED TURN

FROM THE BOOK W.O.M.A.N
BY INGA BIRE



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Chapter 6: An Unexpected Turn

Sarah had spent years rebuilding. She had forgotten what true hardship felt like. Emma and Christina were growing, making her life lighter, allowing her to breathe more freely. But with that relief came something unexpected—loneliness. She started feeling as though something was missing, as if she needed to fill a void. And believing she had everything under control, she made another mistake. It was as if her life was meant to be driven by one mistake after another.

Something deep inside her longed to be in a couple again. She craved the companionship, the idea of sharing life with someone, and so she embarked on this nonsense, trying to give it meaning when, in reality, it was never a relationship to begin with.

She had given everything to create a stable home for Emma and Christina, ensuring they never felt like outsiders, that they had a secure and happy childhood. She had a steady job, a rhythm to life, and the quiet satisfaction of knowing that her sacrifices had paid off.

But stability can be lonely.

Years had passed since she had allowed herself to think about love. She had been so focused on providing for her daughters, on making sure they never felt the struggles she had endured, that she had ignored her own longing for companionship.

And then, in a moment of weakness, he came.

She had reached a point where she wished she had someone to talk to as an adult—not just about responsibilities and work, but about life, about herself.

Maybe it was time to date again. Maybe she deserved to feel what it was like to have a partner.

And he saw her at the perfect time.

He saw a woman who had built herself up from nothing. A woman who had worked hard, who had stability, who had a soft heart beneath all her strength.

And he knew.

She was his perfect victim.

Sarah was a giver. She would help, she would support, she would carry the weight for others, even when no one asked her to.

And she—she didn't know.

She felt it the first time they met.

A small voice inside her told her something was off.

He wasn't sincere.

But somehow, she didn't care.

She was so confident that she would never make a mistake. She thought she would always know where to stop.

But sometimes, confidence blinds us.

And just like that, she fell.

At first, he seemed kind. He listened, he laughed at the right moments, he gave her attention in a way that made her feel seen again.

But slowly, she became the one giving.

She gave her time.

Then her support.

Then her money.

She convinced herself that this was normal. Relationships were about helping each other, right?

But he wasn't giving anything back.

She ignored it.

Until one day, he left.

And when he left, he didn't just take himself—he shattered everything Sarah had built.

Then came another blow.

Sarah found out she was pregnant. And suddenly, she was consumed by conflicting emotions. She loved children, always had. But this time, she wasn't prepared. The pregnancy made her anxious, but at the same time, she couldn't bring herself to reject the life growing inside her. Who knew what kind of person this child would become? Maybe she was carrying a blessing to the world.

In the midst of all the turmoil, Sarah's mind was clear on one thing—she would protect her baby, no matter what.

But how?

She was alone. The father had vanished. The weight of single motherhood bore down on her, heavier than ever before. Nights were sleepless, filled with whispers of doubt. Could she do this again? Could she raise another child alone, fight the same battles, endure the same struggles?

Then, just as she was trying to make peace with this new reality, another tragedy struck.

Her mother needed her the most.

Sarah had always thought there would be time. Time to visit, time to reconnect, time to make up for the years she had spent away rebuilding. But time is ruthless. It takes without warning, and it never gives back.

She needed to be there. But Sarah could not travel.

The pregnancy made it impossible, the risk was too high. And so, she was forced to wait—helpless, torn between her own safety and the mother she loved so deeply.

And then, before she could see her again, her mother passed.

Sarah had to go to the funeral eight weeks before the birth of her daughter. She was grieving her mother while carrying a child who had already been abandoned before even entering the world.

The loss and the birth together created a storm inside Sarah, one that felt impossible to navigate. After the birth, the weight of her mother's absence became unbearable. She couldn't make peace with the loss. Now, more than ever, she needed her—to hear her voice, to receive her advice, to simply call and share her fears. The loss and the birth together created a storm inside Sarah, one that felt impossible to navigate.

These days felt like the hardest of Sarah's life.

She had been through war.

She had been through betrayal.

She had been through loneliness, loss, and
struggle.

But this?

This was something else.

She didn't know how she would make it.

Surviving this required more than resilience—it demanded the strength of a warrior, the endurance of the ocean against the storm, the unbreakable will of a soul that refused to surrender.

And yet, she had no choice.

A woman's heart is magical. It carries love and pain in equal measure, yet it finds a way to survive, even when survival seems impossible.

Sarah had lost everything, yet she still had her children.

She made sacrifices once again.

She left her job to care for her newborn daughter, but that decision threw her into financial hardship. Starting over—again—felt like an endless cycle.

Bills piled up. She watched the numbers in her bank account dwindle. There were moments of despair, moments when she questioned whether she had made the right choice.

The days blurred together. She barely had time to grieve. Between feedings, sleepless nights, and the reality of single motherhood pressing down on her, the weight of her circumstances was crushing.

But she was determined.

She had done it before.

She would do it again.

Sarah spent nights staring at the ceiling, exhausted yet unable to sleep, her mind racing with fears of an uncertain future. But in those quiet hours, between exhaustion and survival, she made a vow.

She would not let hardship define her.

She would rise, not just for herself, but for her children, for the dreams she had yet to build, for the life she knew she was still capable of creating.

She was not broken. She was being remade.

In the midst of the storm, she found her strength. In the depth of her suffering, she discovered her resilience.

She took a breath. Then another. And with each inhale, she reclaimed her life.

And so, Sarah stood up, picked up the broken pieces of her life, and took the first step forward.