

INTRODUCTION

DISCOVERING STRENGTH IN THE FACE OF UNCERTAINTY

What does it take to transform a life of struggle into one of purpose and fulfillment?

How do you turn loss, fear, and uncertainty into courage, strength, and triumph?

This book is my answer to those questions—a story of survival, perseverance, and finding possibility in even the darkest moments.

From my earliest memories, life taught me hard lessons. At just three years old, I experienced the heartbreak of separation from my parents and brothers. Placed in government foster care, I spent six lonely months apart from those I loved most in the world. That pain never left me. How could it? It resurfaces every time I see a child without their mother.

When we were finally reunited, my mother, newly recovered from mental illness, became the anchor of our family once again. And we would need that anchor for times to come because the struggle was far from over.

We lived in poverty, where food was often a luxury. I remember days of going hungry. I remember making promises to myself at the young age of six: When I grow up, I'll make sure no one around me ever goes without food. My pantry will always be full. Even as a child, I clung to the belief that change was possible. I believed that I could create a better future.

But life doesn't always make change easy. As an adult, I was trapped in a cycle that felt all too familiar. I realized that despite being the mother to two beautiful daughters, my life wasn't much better than my parents' lives had been. There was stability, yes, but I wanted more than stability—I wanted to break free from limitations and live the life I had dreamed of since I was a child.

In my youth, I envisioned a future filled with hope and purpose. I saw myself earning a university education, providing a loving home for my family, and showing my children a world of possibilities. I dreamed of traveling with them, giving them opportunities I never had, and watching them thrive. This dream was my fuel. It was a vision so vivid that it pushed me forward, even when the odds were stacked against me.

Then came the defining moment of my life—the decision to leave Hungary in 1987. It was a leap into the unknown, fraught with danger and uncertainty. Leaving behind my homeland, my family, and everything familiar, I risked it all for the chance at a better life. I didn't have a detailed plan—just a dream and the determination to pursue it—no matter what.

Looking back on that journey from struggle to empowerment, I see the lessons it holds—not just the good but also the bad. After all, the times when we are challenged most are when we

learn and grow the most. These lessons are not merely for me or other refugees (although we tend to have our secret power) but for anyone facing life's challenges. That is what prompted me to write this book—to help others on their journeys.

Every hardship I endured taught me there is always a way forward, even when the path isn't clear. Every time I stumbled, I learned to rise again, stronger and more determined. And every decision I made, no matter how daunting, became a stepping stone to the incredible life I live today.

I've lived through unimaginable pain and fear but also witnessed the power of hope and resilience. I've learned that success isn't about perfection—it's about persistence. It's about daring to believe in yourself, even when the odds feel insurmountable. This ability is within us all. I like to call it our Secret Power.

This book is more than my story; it's an invitation. Whether you are a refugee like me or have ever felt stuck, overwhelmed, or unsure of your next step, I want to show you that there is always a way forward. No matter how hopeless it may seem, possibility exists in every situation. Every challenge—no matter how painful or unfair—carries the seed of personal growth and strength. Sometimes, those seeds take time to sprout, but with faith, reflection, and action, they always have the potential to bloom into something powerful. I hope to inspire you to look beyond these obstacles, trust your instincts in determining your next step, and find the courage to act—especially when the path is not clear.

As you turn the pages, I invite you to walk alongside me and witness the moments that broke me, the decisions that shaped me, and the dreams that carried me forward. But more importantly, I hope that by sharing my journey, you'll begin to see and appreciate your own in a new way. Challenges are not the end of your story; they are the turning points.

Along the way, you will find tools, lessons, and inspiration to navigate your own storms with clarity, resilience, and confidence—knowing that within every hardship lies a hidden invitation to rise stronger than before. Each chapter will guide you through both reflection and action with the following tools:

- **Insightful inquiry:** A thought-provoking question at the start of each chapter to help you reflect as you read.
- **Mastering your Secret Power:** The key lessons I gained from my experiences and how they can be applied to your own journey.
- **Reflection prompts:** Journaling questions at the end of each chapter to deepen your understanding and help you apply these insights to your life.

My story proves that no matter where you start or how many times life knocks you down, there is always a way to rise when you tap into your secret power. If you feel stuck, are struggling, or are uncertain about any area of your life, this book will help you see things differently, break free from what's holding you back, and move forward with renewed strength and purpose.

To give yourself the strongest foundation possible, take time to first reflect and identify your personal strengths. You also may want to keep a daily journal as you read to capture moments of hope and resilience along the way. For even more intentional action, write a letter to your future self, highlighting one key strength you want to nurture on your journey. Starting this way signals your inner power that things are about to change for the better.

Let's get started!