

An Open-Ended Run

Layne Coleman

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Canadian actor Layne Coleman's *An Open-Ended Run* is a reflective memoir-in-essays. From the vantage of his sixties, Coleman grapples with childhood trauma, the death of his wife, and how loss shaped his and his daughter's lives.

These fourteen episodic essays detail Coleman's childhood on a farm in Saskatchewan, his move to Toronto and first acting break, and the turbulent circumstances of meeting his future wife, who, at the time, was dating the director of *Hamlet*, the play he was starring in. He struggled with drinking, shifted into the roles of father and caretaker after his wife's death from cancer, and felt enduring love for his daughter. Adjustments arrived with age, too, including an open-heart surgery.

The style is conversational and confessional. With an actor's flourish, Coleman throws himself onto the page, recalling his actions with vulnerability—if sometimes eschewing self-examination on more difficult subjects. There are erotic encounters with a variety of women, including a preacher's daughter, a Korean classmate in a repressed evangelical setting, and one of his teachers. Two shame-inducing visits to a strip club are also included.

But Coleman also negotiates nuanced topics like the cultural and spiritual differences between French- and English-speaking Canada, often observed through Carole, his late Quebecois wife who was a talented novelist and critic. Poverty and troubled spirituality inherited from his poor, devout Christian, Depression-era parents influenced his perspective; even so, he delighted in Toronto's vibrant arts scene. He pursued widening experiences with vigor and tenderness, and his unique, candid relationship with his daughter forms the book's eventual emotional core.

With a performer's gift of seeming to see himself as actions unfurl, *An Open-Ended Run* is a memorable memoir about life's messiness and the beauty that emerged despite and because of the pain.

MIKE GOOD (September / October 2024)

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