

This book is about a teenage boy who wants to change his life and attitude around. After experiencing a childhood trauma from the abuse from his father, plus having to deal with the lack of motivation for doing better in his school work, and no offers from anyone, not even from his stepfather, to help him get through his misfortunes, he directs his own anger and frustration on the people that showed no empathy for him. All of this had gotten the attention of a mysterious, gigantic deity, named Lady Zhera, who happens to be the Empress of the Crystals Of Time. She was concerned of how his behavior would continue to cripple his life, and hinders him of his happiness, if he doesn't handle the adversities in his life properly. Now with Lady Zehra as his mentor, he embarks on his journey on his well-being before his fate is sealed.

Erick Sowers has a brilliant imagination and is an absolute truth-teller, a combination which makes him a thrilling writer to read. *The Significance of Redemption* is a beautiful expression of who he is - honest, vulnerable and endlessly creative. Erick is a gifted performer, a skilled musician, and someone who commits deeply to anything that he does. He has big dreams and ambitions, and I have no doubt that he will get to where he wants to go. It has been a true pleasure to get to know this incredible young man over the past few years, and I am endlessly grateful that he continues to share himself so openly with this community and the world.

- Aidan Sank, SAY Artistic Director of Confident Voices

To know Erick Sowers is to know a person who is triumphant. Erick has a unique and rare ability to identify his deepest truths, process his past, and articulate his emotions. He uses these pillars of his personhood to guide his keen artistic eye, to produce powerful creations which he gloriously shares with the world. His generous art settles in our collective mind and changes us - this is the definition of a true artist.

- Kate Detrick, SAY Director of Confident Voices

Erick Sowers has the unique capability to instantly transport the reader into the vivid and colorful landscape of his imagination, and what a joy it is to visit! The author has bravely and boldly chosen to share the depths of his spirit in these words, and the vulnerability showcased in these pages is remarkable. *The Significance of Redemption* is sure to captivate the reader with this coming-of-age tale about a young man's journey towards self-discovery, healing, and, ultimately, redemption. I am made more by the time I shared with Erick and I am so grateful for the opportunity to have worked with him.

- Miranda Di Perno, SAY Teaching Artist

Erick is a deep, thoughtful young man who exudes creativity in all he does. His performances are so rich and exciting. He is the type of actor all directors want to work with because he throws his whole self into his characters and lights up the stage. He is a true artist who does it all: voice actor, musician, and storyteller! I am in awe of his dedication to the craft and excited to continue following his career.

- Laura Bozzone, SAY Teaching Artist

THE SIGNIFICANCE OF REDEMPTION

ERICK SOWERS

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Erick Sowers

The Significance of Redemption

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Published by: SAY: The Stuttering Association for the Young

Text Design by: Life Styl Design

Cover and Interior Illustration Design by: Francisco Borges

Distributed by:

SAY: The Stuttering Association for the Young
247 West 37th Street, 5th Floor New York, NY 10018

Printed and Bound by BookBaby

DEDICATION

In loving memory of Michael Clay Welch, my Grandad.

“Our brain simulates reality. So, our everyday experiences are a form of dreaming, which is to say, they are mental models, simulations, not the things they appear to be.”

- Stephen LaBerge

The Significance of Redemption

ERICK SOWERS

THE SIGNIFICANCE OF REDEMPTION

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PROLOGUE

My name is Arthur. I am only seventeen years old, a year away from when I turn eighteen. You see, everybody at that age is supposed to learn how to take full responsibility that adults have. Their parents might even raise them well to do so or learn how to do so without one of their real parents really there for them, and instead having a step parent as a replacement. In my situation, it's more the latter than the former. But I did not feel like having a step parent being in my family would make me love my stepdad the same way as I do with mom. I feel like I am getting a bad rep from everyone around me. But really, it's my pain that feeds my desire to escape into fantasy from reality's situations, and reality itself. I do not want to look and sound like a realist who relies on real, boring things, and not having to use their imagination and creativity to solve issues that I have to face, even if I had no other choice.

I do think that I know what I am doing in my life, but my parents disagree. I do not understand why they do this. All my parents ever say to me are things like, "You are a teenager, you are growing." or, "I don't care, it's normal." and among other things. But things are about to change.

CHAPTER 1

A WEIRD EXPERIENCE

One night, when bedtime rolled around, I woke up to a strange room that almost looked like my own room, but different. The environment around it feels different also. The walls were covered in a purple, very shiny hue. I was pretty curious to know what is making the walls sparkle like this. I reached the wall that is near the back of the bed and touched it, only for it to spit out a purple like smoke and dust at my face. I cleaned off the excess dust from my face and chest. I quickly realized that the dust smelled like grape juice. It gave me the idea to go all hyper with the walls to put all of the dust into my mouth, stuffing the purple deliciousness into it. Then I heard a voice that came

elsewhere in the room. I looked at the posters, and they appeared to be talking.

Superman in the Justice League poster began talking to me, “Arthur, face your problems, and do not run away.”

I did not understand what he was talking about. I turned around and ignored what he said to me, until another poster was talking to me.

The Batman poster that I have told me, “Follow the arrows that are in your house. You will know what Superman means once the trail ends.”

I was unsure at first, but I went with what he said. I followed the arrows that were in the frames on the walls through the hallway, heading to every direction that the signs were pointing at. As I was walking, I felt a splash from the floor through my bare feet within every step. The waves from the splashes morphed into small entities that almost resemble me and my mother.

It didn’t take me long to realize that these are my memories of when I used to bond with my mother, and the times that my mother took me places where we could spend time with each other. Everything was going really great, until my mother got married to a new man in which I refused to call him Dad. From that point, I stopped paying attention to the illusions on the floor and marched on. I continued following the pathway through the stairs, the living room, and porch. There was a sign on the door that

said, “Pathway ends here. Open this door, your answers are near.” So I opened the front door to see a woman, who was waiting patiently for my door to open. She had pale white skin and hair that was glowing luminously. Her hair was wrapped into two buns. She had blue, shiny, and crystalline-looking eyes that contained an aura of kindness that is connected to her heart. Her face was covered in a great dose of pink and purple makeup. She was also wearing a white silhouette dress that had one leg exposed. She had a very peppy personality.

At first, I was wide-eyed looking at the woman, seeing how beautiful she was, and that put me into a trance-like state. But then, the woman snapped her fingers in front of my face and said, “Wake up, somebody needs to see you. I’m here to pick you up.”

From there, I snapped out of my love stare, and responded with, “Oh, uh, um, okay. But why though, and how are we supposed to go there? You don’t even have a car.”

The woman reached her hand out to me, and said, “Take my hand, and you will find out why soon enough.”

I still didn’t get why I had to follow all the signs that the framed pictures were telling me, just to lead me to a woman who doesn’t provide any details about what problems I’m facing, or even why I was in this fantasy-like dimension of my home in the first place. But I went with it anyway, because of this, and took her hand. But then, all

of a sudden, my feet had stopped touching the ground, and began to float in the air. I panicked and almost lost control of where I was moving. Then I realized that the woman was actually levitating off of the ground, gripping me along with her. I calmed down, and we lifted off into the purple sky.

I asked the Woman, “W-what is your name, and where are you taking me?”

The woman responded with, “I’m Karine Timashipper, but you can call me Karine. I am an admin of Humanity timeline creator, The Crystals Of Time, and that is the place we are heading now.”

“Oh...” I said while amazed at the scenery of the stars in the purple sky, too stumped for words to say anything else.

A little while later, we see more of the people that looked like Karine, same attire, but different faces and names. That’s when I knew we were getting closer to the place that Karine had mentioned. When we arrived there, we landed on some sort of crystal-like glass platform, which serves as a decoration for the planet’s front entrance. Two guards opened the doors for us, and we went in. The room was ginormous, like about the size of a baseball dome ginormous. There were about hundreds of pink crystals growing everywhere in the room, from the floors, to the corners, to the ceiling. There were a lot of fancy dressed women carrying spherical-like objects that appeared to be orbs, and they seemed to be transporting them into separate hallways.

When we stepped on the carpet, the guards backed away. We approached the woman that was sitting on her throne. And no, she does not look like the average size human you see in real life, she was about the height of a two-story house. She gets up from her throne, and begins to walk to me. She had lavender purple skin and long hair. She had lavender purple skin and long hair. She also had blue eyes, and dark purple makeup. She was also wearing a long blue dress and had the back of the hem almost extended to the back of the room. She was also wearing blue high heel stilettos that are made out of a mix of blue and purple jewelry, which had a beautiful shine, almost as shiny as candy gloss paint on a Ferrari. She had long dark blue fingernails that were about as sharp as sewing needles. She was also wearing a crown that was made out of the same materials as the heels. Her face showed a look of sheer dominance, which to be honest, scared me.

As soon as she was looming over me, she said to me, "I've been expecting you, Arthur."

I looked up and scaredly asked while I stuttered, "U-u-um, w-w-who a-are you?"

The massive lady said, with authority, "I am Lady Zheraous Calamitus IV, but you may address me as Lady Zhera."

CHAPTER 2

IT ALL BEGINS WITH A TERRIBLE TEST

I quickly jumped up, and almost panicked, only to see my stepdad waking me up for school. He said, “Come on kiddo, time to get up. You need to go to school.”

As soon as he said that, I had a very annoyed and angered look in my face, “Ugh! Why do I need to go to school? I hate it there! I’d rather stay home and rot here.”

My stepdad then squinted his eyes at me, and said, “Son, don’t give me that attitude! You need to go school to get the education you need, so you can have a job. You won’t have one if you don’t go.”

“Ugh, fine!” I shouted as I decided to finally get up and put on my clothes. I continued, “I’ll go to that rotted place that you call school.”

After that, I went downstairs and made myself some cereal. About 3 minutes after I ate my cereal, I grabbed my bookbag, and went out to school.

Along the way, I ran into a group of bullies. The baddest boy in the bunch was Kevin, who was a few inches taller than me, and was wearing what appears to be a black and white Jock sweater. He was also wearing blue jeans with a Gucci belt. He carries that menacing smirk on his face, which is enough to creep someone out.

He said sternly, “Hey kid, watch where you are going.”

I did not want any trouble with him, so I said, “Look, I-I’m sorry for bumping into you, now can you please move out of the way?”

I tried to move past him, but he stepped towards my path and blocked my way.

“You are not going anywhere kid,” he said angrily, “not until you give me your wallet.”

I replied, “N-no, I-I am not giving you my wallet.”

He grabbed me by the shirt and said while gritting his teeth, “Listen porky pig, you better give me your wallet or else you will be dead as a squirrel.”

One of the boys in the group turned to the rest of them, saying while busting out laughing, “You heard that? He called him porky pig! The director’s must’ve hired him to play the next porky pig in Looney Tunes or something.”

I’m really never fazed when a big guy like Kevin grabs me, but when somebody goes around and makes fun of my speech, they draw the last straw.

I screamed at Kevin at the top of my lungs, “No, I will not, nor will I ever give anything to you! And that. Is. FINAL!”

I balled up my fist and was about to deliver a blow to his face, but stopped when Principal Emerson stepped in and said, “Hey, leave the kid alone! He needs to be in class.”

Kevin leaned close to my face and said, “You’re lucky that I haven’t even taken my shot yet.” and shoved me backwards. The principal then takes my hand and whisk me into the front entrance of the school.

The hallways of the school may look like your average Ivy league school halls, with the luxurious golden arches, very fancy murals, and all the other stuff. But honestly, I feel deserted in this place. Some of the students here appeared unattractive, and rather out of shape. There are

some who even focus more on their phone, and playing on their game consoles rather than taking the initiative to do something meaningful in life outside of their own little bubble. Not even helping a brother like me out on how I can manage my emotional state could even make the school environment better.

The Principal and I had arrived at my English class, and he knocked on the door.

Then comes Mrs. Kepler, who answers the door. “Yes, what is it, Principal Emerson?”

The principal said gently, “One of your students is late to class, because he was messing around with those boys again.”

I tried to interrupt their chat to say what really happened, “But but but Principal Emerson, I wasn’t messing with those boys, they only came to steal my lunch money, and--”

But Mrs. Kepler cut me off and complained, “Ugh, I don’t have time for your nonsense. You’ve been late for like, god knows how many times, and you give me all kinds of excuses. The next time you come late again, and I hear another excuse, it’s off to suspension with you.”

I grumbled and fumed under my breath once I heard that, because she didn’t know what I had to go through just

to get into the school. But I cannot let that anger loose, so I calmed down and stepped into the classroom.

Mrs. Kepler sighed in relief and said, “Now with that out of the way...” She closed the door stepped up to the front of the classroom’s promethean board, and announced, “Class, today you all are going to take your midterms based on what you read so far on Hamlet.”

As soon as she said that, the class gave off a very bored, angry moan.

Mrs. Kepler taps her stick against her hand to calm down. “Settle down now,” She said, “it’s not like you are getting tested on this everyday. Now, you will have exactly a half-an-hour to complete this test.”

Right at the moment when she grabbed the booklets from her desk. I silently went into panic mode, because I wasn’t really prepared for tests at all. Maybe it’s because I couldn’t find the right person in this school to help me study for the test, because I was having trouble understanding basic Shakespearean English. Most of the kids I asked for help are more interested in beating the next score on fortnite, or on among us, or whatever video game phenomenon that was available for whatever mobile devices or game console there is. No way I could ask my dad, because I don’t think he has the slightest idea of understanding Shakespearean English either.

Once the test was in front of me, I did the little “Hooooo-za” to calm myself down. I quickly grabbed my pencil, opened the booklet and started the test. 15 minutes later, I was stuck on a very hard question, regarding why the ghost is framing Hamlet, In which I didn’t read over that part, because of the reasons I had said above before the test began. I was sweating through my hands and feet, my legs were shaking, and I started to fidget for the next thirty seconds, until I decided to just guess on the question. Because of the fact that I wasted so much time on just one question, I decided to do the same for the next questions, until I was done.

By the time I said, “Mrs. Kepler I’m done.” She comes in and takes the test and says to me, “My, you are an early bird.”

I was relieved when she said that, because I never hear say it like that. That made me relieved that I was able to survive 30 minutes of this lousy test in the class.

CHAPTER 3

AN UNEXPECTED TURN OF EVENTS

It was the last few minutes before the school day ended. I was sent back down to my English class, which was my homeroom by the way. I went in and sat down on my seat, and began to glare at my desk, all while sulking, because I really couldn't handle the pressure of already failing my classes due to my negligence of coming to them on time, plus getting into trouble for things that kept me distracted from my disappointment.

Mrs. Kepler was rounding up the last few students in the class, and as she finished she said, "Alright class, I am

going to give you back your tests. Some of you did pretty well. But the others are, well, not so fortunate.”

I was excited when she said that, because I was really expecting a high score that could help me redeem myself for doing so horrible while in class. But the test score on the test that my teacher passed out to me was the exact opposite of what I expected. I got a 25% on my Hamlet Midterm test, which was a really terrible score. That low score felt like a knife to my heart, because of how painful it is to experience the crushing of my chance of doing better in my English class and in school as a whole.

Mrs. Kepler looked at me sternly and said, “You. Your constant failing at these tests made me grow weary of you. I keep telling you that we both know you have the potential to do better, but you don’t always keep your promises of studying harder. So for now, you go home, and tell your parents that you need their help.”

My mouth was already flowing with reasons why I can’t study with them, “But they won’t understand the-”

Mrs. Kepler cut me off, saying, “I don’t want to hear any excuses. I’m sure your parents would understand.”

The school bell rang, and the teacher dismissed the class. Before I head out of the door, Mrs. Kepler said to me, “Remember what I said, ask your parents for some help.”

I wasn't sure if I would take the advice that my teacher said due to the lack of clarity, and the fact that she didn't know my situation properly. But I went with it, and slowly nodded my head, and headed out the front door.

Upon arriving home, I knew I was going to get into major trouble, so I decided to keep my composure, and hid the test in my pocket. When I opened the door, I saw that my stepdad was sitting at his desk, finishing up his work.

He turned around and said to me, "Hey, son. How was school?"

I responded calmly, "Uh, good, I guess."

He then asked me, "How was your test son?"

I started to lose my composure a little bit, and lied, "U-uh, good, I guess."

My stepdad notices the piece of paper that is sticking out of my pocket. "What's that in your pocket?" he said, "Is it something important?"

I immediately started to shake and sweat was starting to pour through my face and hands again. "No, no no no no, it's nothing really. It's actually something I need to keep to myself."

My stepdad scrunches his face at me, thinking that I am really lying, which I am, so I could spare myself from getting into trouble.

He said, sternly, “You don’t keep secrets from a parent you know. Hand over the paper, now.”

“But I-” I protested before I got cut off again from him repeating, “Now!”

So I did what he told me to do, and I took the booklet from my pocket and handed it over to him. I could already tell I blew it based on the reaction on his face when he looked at my test score.

“WHAT?!” He shouted, “You got a 25 on your test?! Why?!”

I explained to him as best as I could why I got a low score, “Well, because... I couldn’t find anyone that could help me study.”

But he continued to shout at me, saying “I keep telling you, I’m sure you would find someone at your school to help you with your studies, but you didn’t listen. This was a chance for you to make up your grades, and you failed.”

I started to yell back, “Well it’s your fault that you didn’t bother to help me find a friend that I could study with, and trust. And it’s also your fault that you didn’t even know how to understand what is being said in the book. That is why I didn’t ask for any help from you, because you know nothing of what is explained in there!”

My step dad stood up and screamed, “Don’t you dare yell back at me Arthur. you should’ve known better than to just take your anger out on me.”

The argument had gotten the attention of my mother, who was finishing up the dishes.

She came into the living room and said, “What happened?”

He told my mom, “Arthur had failed another exam today, and started to blame me for what he did, saying I didn’t help him study, because I don’t know the material, I didn’t help him find any friends that could help him, and this and that. He didn’t realize that this was his chance of turning his grades around, but he failed.”

At this point my mother put on her scary, angry glance over me, and said, “You are definitely grounded for 2 weeks, because you just failed another test that we told you, time and time again to study for.”

“Oh come on!” I began to groan.

“Don’t ‘Aw come on’ me,” she said, “He is right, you should’ve known better than to just come here and start arguing with us over this. Now go to your room, and don’t come out ‘till I say so.”

“But--” I began, but I gave up and turned around to go upstairs. Before I entered my room, I yelled, “You know what mom, sometimes I wish you were not a part of my

life anymore. I hate you so much right now. I hope that one day, that you will be gone from my life. FOREVER!” and slammed the door. I went towards my bed, stomping angrily. I started to punch my pillows, and put them into a chokehold, as if they were real people that did me wrong.

After I calm down after that beatdown, I immediately lie down on my ransacked bed, wondering why no one in my life offered any help to deal with situations like this, and how it all came down to this. I began to question myself. Was it because I wasn't taking the initiative to get help from anyone in my school? Or maybe it's because I am too impatient and temperamental for anyone else to handle me? There are other questions that I keep coming up with, but after a while, I started to become really tired from questioning myself, and I fell asleep. It was bedtime anyway, and that would give me the time to recover from the event.

CHAPTER 4

OUR DIMENSIONS CROSS AGAIN

I was still steadily sleeping on what I believed to be my bed, but as the minutes went by, the soft texture of my blankets morphed into a hard, uncomfortable, solid surface, like a hardwood floor. As I ruffled, shuffled, and tossed around, trying to get back to sleep with this uncomfortable sensation, I faintly heard a feminine like voice calling my name.

“Arthur.... Arthur...” it said. I hardly heard the voice while I was in deep sleep mode, so she called out my name, more loudly this time. “Arthur...”

That is when I shot up to see the dress of a familiar person that I have met before, but I had forgotten her name. I looked up, and saw the gigantic woman's face for the second time.

I stammered, saying, "Q-Queen Zerhus?" The gigantic lady took great offense by how I butchered name so badly that it made her angry.

She stamped her staff, yelling with authority, "Lady... Zhera!" When I heard the staff stomping with such great force, and magnitude, it gave me quite a scare. She eventually took a breath to calm down, and said, "Anyway, do you know the reason why you are here with me?"

I shook my head, scaredly saying, "N-no?"

And with that, she takes her gigantic hand out and puts me into her grasp. She held me out to her face and said, with much concern, "I sent you back here because of what happened at your house. Your actions had become very concerning to me, and that could impose a great threat to your destiny."

"What are you talking about?" I questioned, "I do have a destiny to follow."

"But it is a destiny that you don't want to have," the queen said.

I asked again, "Why are you saying this?"

Then she turned her head to look at the black void, and said, “Observe.”

With a snap of a finger that was so loud that it almost burst my eardrums, the black void had suddenly lightened up into a planet, filled with these massive rock towers, standing parallel to each other, containing large pink shiny objects that formed near the bottom of each of them. While the massive lady walked through the planet, carrying me with her hand, I began to look into a few of the objects.

I asked Zhera, “What are these, Your Highness?”

“These are your memories...” she said, “all encased into these time crystals.”

“I see.” I replied as I gazed into the crystals that were filled with memories that I had with my mom. “They are like a timestamp, right?”

The queen replied, “Correct.”

Most of the times that I spent with my mother when I was a young boy were quite fun, especially when I squirted water into my mother’s face with a water gun on a cruise ship. But I still don’t know why this was a problem for me, as I already believed that I was going to have a good future if I kept these in my life.

I said to the Queen, “But I don’t see anything wrong with these. Why do you?”

Lady Zhera said to me, with concern again, “You are looking at the wrong years, Child. The problem lies ahead, when your mother and birth father were married.”

As soon as she said that, we suddenly stepped up to a crystal that is dark purple, like that of dark magic. The atmosphere around the jewel was black, foggy and miserable, which almost reminds me of the atmosphere that is in my school.

“This is the reason why you are back here...” She said, “This is the main reason why I’ve seen so many of these Dark-infused memories in your timeline.”

I asked her, “Can you go into more detail on this?”

“Your birth father is to blame for all of this...” She said, with more concern on her face.

“How?!” I exclaimed, since I thought it was illogical that my birth father would probably do something like this.

The Queen continued, “His abusive behavior towards you and your mother had generated a curse on some of your memories when you were younger, which had caught my attention. I believe this one’s the worst out of the rest I’ve ever seen.”

I turned around to face Lady Zhera and said, “Why would he want to do something like this to me? Was he trying to put bad karma on me for turning against him?”

“Look into the crystal, and you will find out.” She said as she pointed her head towards the large dark gem.

I did as she told me to do, and looked into the crystal, to witness one of the worst times I ever had as a young child.

CHAPTER 5

SINFUL PASTS ARE THE DEVIL'S DESSERTS

There is one rule for living happily. Listen to your parents, as they provide all the love, lessons, and care you need to take care of yourself when you grow up. There are some children that have parents that might even raise them well to do so or learn how to do so without one of their real parents really being there for them. In my situation, it's more the latter than the former. When I was little, My dad wasn't always nice to me nor my mom. Every night he spent his time alone drinking his liquor in the living room laying on the couch not caring about a single person that is in the household. Every time he was ordered to do something he often got into his drunk, angry state, arguing with my mom,

sometimes over paying the bills and taxes. In reality, he's mooching off of my mom for her money because he doesn't have a job. He often uses that as an excuse not to do his fair share of chores around the house and for the family. It gets worse. The arguments were getting progressively more and more intense until one fateful day he did something that no man should ever do to his own family.

One time, when I was eight years old, me and my mother went out to buy some clothes for the family because we noticed that we ran out of some suitable clothes for us to wear throughout the day. I remember we arrived home and we found dad stomping towards us angrily.

He said while slurring, "What were you out again?!"

My mom explained to him "We went out to shop for clothes for me and our son because you didn't even bother to tell us that we're running short on clothes and that you didn't hand me any money to buy some earlier." She continued, "Oh wait, you didn't want to hand me money for them either, since you spent most of your cash on things that you shouldn't be doing." She starts listing the things he spends money on that adds more money to our debt. "You spent most of your stack on 6 packs of liquor, unwanted house parties, gambling in the streets, etc. Your crazy spending habits are making it harder for us to pay off our debt from the bank."

At that moment, I knew that discussing anything about our funds and financial problems would make my father lose it.

He then grabs my mom by the upper part of her shirt, lifts her up in the air, and shoves her towards a wall, yelling, “I don’t care nor want to hear anything about no debt! I just wanted time alone with myself, and you two ruined it for me!”

He proceeded to slam mom down on the floor and beat the living daylights out of her. He covered her with bruises all over her arms, legs, and her torso. Both of her eyes were red, black, and blue, and were swollen shut with blood from his punches. When I saw my mom getting beat up while crying in pain and distress, I followed suit and bawled for my life because of how horrifying it was for me to witness her being assaulted by my own father. He grabbed hold of my mother again, and this time, threw her across the living room, towards the glass cabinet, and it shattered and collapsed with her inside of it. The damage had left her a few broken bones.

I jumped in and yelled, “Stop Daddy, stop!”

He turned around and said, “You want some too?” He charged towards me saying, “Come here!!”

At that moment, I started to panic, and ran to pick up my mothers phone that fell out of her pocket. From there,

I ran all the way towards my room, and locked the door on my dad. I crawled towards my closet, and locked it also.

My dad was struggling to get the door opened, yelling, “Come out of your room right now!”

From there I started to whimper, and tremble with fear, because I was scared that my father would bust into my room and do the same thing that he did to my mother. I then proceeded to call 911.

A dispatcher picked up the phone immediately, “911, what’s your emergency?”

I started to whimper again, before responding to the dispatcher. “I need help. My daddy beat up mommy.”

The dispatcher asked me, “Your daddy beat up your mommy?” to which I replied, “Yes.”

Then she asked me, concerningly, “How did he beat your mommy?”

I explained, “Daddy was punching and kicking mommy when she was on the floor, and threw her to the cabinet! She is bleeding everywhere.”

The dispatcher immediately knew that this was a case of domestic violence, and called for an ambulance. She also called for police to investigate the situation.

She then tells me, “Alright sweetheart, help is on the way. What is your address?”

I did remember the address when I learned it from my mother plenty of times, and it still is within my memory. “320-80 Harrison Street, St James.”

A half-an-hour later, the police and an ambulance arrived in front of our home. I went along with my mother to the hospital, because I was unwilling to stay behind with my father to leave her alone. The cops immediately placed handcuffs on my dad’s hands. He resisted, but the cop and his team were able to put him down on the ground. He was then charged with assault, domestic abuse against a spouse, and attempted child abuse. That was the moment when I was relieved that my father was out of my life.

But the nightmare from that moment did not stop there, as while my father was sitting in his cell, fuming in anger, a dark purple-like smoke substance came out from his ears, and was carried from the police station to the hospital where I was with my mother, in the emergency room. That substance had run through my nose, all the way down to my heart.

Fast forward nine years since that incident happened. I never heard any news about what happened to my father from there on. I kinda feel bad for what I did years ago, since he’s my father. But still, then again, he deserved after what he had done to the family.

I immediately took my head out of the Crystal, as Lady Zhera spoke to me.

“Because of your father’s foul behavior that created that energy,” she said, “some of that energy was passed down to you, so you repeated some of his behavior towards your parents.”

“What happens if I continue with this kind of behavior?” I asked.

The Queen replied, with caution in her voice, “Then your fate might end up the same as your father, or worse, you would die.”

I immediately gulped with fear after she told me that that was going to happen.

“How?” I question, “How can I avoid having this fate?”

“The answer is quite simple,” She replied while bending over towards me, “Do not let your father’s anger corrupt your soul.”

I tried to speak to her to clarify what she said, “Can you at least show me the mechanisms of controlling it, please?” But the Queen turned around to walk into the darkness, and disappeared.

CHAPTER 6

A WHOLE NEW LEVEL OF TROUBLE

I felt something patting on my shoulder, like a hand, followed by a voice shouting, “Wake up, you are late for school.”

I shot up to see my stepdad again, waking me up for school again. I glanced over to my alarm clock, and it said, 8:20 am, ten minutes until school starts.

I immediately got out of bed, and began to put on my clothes. I didn’t even think of brushing my teeth or even eating breakfast, so I ran out of the door. But I started to get hungry by the time I was about 4 and a quarter miles away from my house, so I stopped at the nearest McDonald’s to

get myself a sausage mcmuffin. I didn't care if I was late to school, because my stomach and mood are more important.

As I stepped in, the place was packed. There was a really long line of customers waiting to order and pick up their food. I regretted going in there, but I had no other choice, so I stepped in line. After probably about a few minutes, I was able to move up a space, but not much to reach the register.

As I was about to step forward, someone from behind shoved me into the lady up in front of me, and said, "That is your just desserts for what happened at school the other day."

I immediately turned around to face the person who shoved me, who was none other than Kevin, who was responsible for starting a fight with me the other day at school.

I turned back to the lady, who was rather angry and upset.

"Hey," the lady shouted, "don't push me like that! That's assault."

I said to the woman, "Sorry, that wasn't me who pushed you like that. It was him." I pointed to Kevin that was behind me.

But she didn't buy it. She said, "Uh uh uh uh, don't play the blame game. I felt you pushing against me, almost touching me on the hip."

Kevin decided to play along with the lady, “Yeah, don’t go pushing people around like that kid. If you want to do something like that then get out.”

I was already aggravated from not eating any breakfast, and the demeanor that they are showing me right now, but I remembered the reminder given to me by Lady Zhera to not let my anger get the best of me.

However, I was too hungry to even heed her advice and defiantly shouted back at them, “No, I will not leave, until I get my order, and until you stop saying that I did.”

When I shouted, everyone else at the restaurant began to stare at us, and some of them even started to phone 911.

The lady then shouted, “Hey everyone! Get someone to call the police on this kid, because he assaulted me. He even caressed me on the hip. He is a predator. ”

After she said that, everyone started to buy into what the lady said, and started to say remarks about me.

“You are a terrible boy.” one man said.

“A person like you should not exist on this earth, ever!” Another said.

Another lady shouted, “What would your mama think of that kind of behavior?”

I then insulted the crowd back, “Well my mama would say that you should mind your business you low-life weir-

dos that would do anything to be glorified by other people like you for accusing me for something as heinous as that. How does that feel?”

That insult had anger and at least 3 people, and they got up and started to rush towards me to take me down. I punched one of them in the nose, and used another customer's egg McMuffin as a weapon to throw it in the other two's face to blind them, and kicked them in the stomach. However, some remnants of the Egg McMuffin had landed on another customer who was at the juice dispenser while getting a refill of his orange juice.

Instead of taking his anger out on me for doing that, he instead takes it out on the man that is standing behind him. He did this by splashing the minute-maid orange juice filled cup on the man standing behind him in the face, which resulted in a massive fight. He also accidentally threw another person's drink that was on the table next to him while he was blinded by the other man's arm during the fight. The cup had hit another customer who was eating, and the woman that was hit by the cup had done the very same thing to the man that was sitting in front of her. The same cycle repeats throughout the restaurant, causing a chain reaction to other customers, which descend into a massive riot. I maneuver through the rioting crowd to hide in the bathroom, which is the safest place for me to hide from the chaos. I began to hide in the toilet stalls, so I could avoid any contact with the people that were in the riot.

About a few hours later, the riot quieted down. I was relieved that the chaos had disappeared. When I stepped out of the bathroom, three cops were standing in front of me. One was patting his baton, the other two were holding handcuffs out.

One of the cops told me, “Come with me, you are in mighty trouble young man.”

The cops turned me around and placed the handcuffs on my hands behind my back, and took me out to the car.

Twelve minutes later we arrived at my school, which was absurd because I was supposed to be taken to the police station. The cop then drags me into the building, straight to the Principal’s office, where my parents were waiting. I was ordered to sit down by Principal Emerson, and boy he is angrier than a mad hatter.

“Are you serious right now?” he said, “Showing up five hours late to school just to stop at a McDonalds for breakfast? Started a riot all because you shoved a lady in line while touching her at the hip, and then getting into major trouble with the law?”

My mom intervened, and said, “Look, Principal Emerson, I never expected for my son to do anything like this. Believe me, I know he has not been doing well with school, and at home either.”

That started to annoy me, and I said to my mom in sheer annoyance, “Mom stop it! It wasn’t me that instigated it, it was Kevin.”

“Don’t you start blaming someone else, Arthur..” my step dad said, “he probably said the same thing about you shoving the lady.”

“And he’s right,” the principal said, concluding to what my dad said, “He even saw you insulting other customers after they criticized you for what you did.”

“But--” I started, but I was interrupted by my principal saying,

“No buts. For inciting a riot in the restaurant, not to mention insulting and injuring other customers, you are hereby suspended for a week.”

“What?!” I shouted, “How could you do something like this to me?! You know I haven’t done anything this bad! All I wanted was a sausage mcmuffin from McDonald’s as a way to feed my hunger, since I’ve overslept, but I can’t since you decided to take sides on the person framing me for starting a riot that almost got me killed!”

I began slamming my fist down Principal Emerson’s desk, and continued my rant.

“You don’t understand what I am going through Principal Emerson, I had overslept and forgot to get breakfast, so the McDonald’s was the nearest place I would go to get

it. However, I would appreciate it if people like you, Kevin, and even the lady at the restaurant would stop making things harder for me then it already is!”

This really pushed Principal Emerson to his breaking point.

“Alright that’s it!” The Principal shouted, “I am increasing your suspension to two months! Get out of this office right now before I call the police!”

My step dad stood up and dragged me out of the office and out the school door to the car. Mom followed us, and we left.

When we got home after we left the school, my step-father had sat me down in the living room. And his face was so scrunched up with anger that it almost made his face turn ugly.

“You sir..” he continued, “are in big trouble! You just had the nerve to throw a tantrum in the office, and break his stuff all around the room, which resulted in you being suspended for two months from school.”

I said, snarky and impatiently, “And YOU had the nerve to tell me it’s all my fault for starting the riot, when clearly it’s not my fault at all! But you decided to take sides with the principal, and didn’t even bother to acknowledge what I wanted to say in my defense!”

My stepfather then raises his voice at me, “Well, you should’ve at least calm down and tell us what really happened!”

“I can’t!” I said, “Even if I took the time to calm down to get you all to listen to me, you will still dismiss me, and say what I said about it was just a heap of baloney! In fact, no matter who I had spoken to to discuss the problems I have in school, they would all say the same thing! I even made time, but obstacles and people like Kevin, and my own mismanagement keep getting in the way!”

My mom jumped in and said, “What you’re saying doesn’t excuse the fact that you threw a giant fit in the principal’s office. You should’ve at least kept your cool, and deal with the punishment at hand, so you don’t get more. But right now, you are grounded for 4 weeks, you lost four of your weeks, you lost your electronic privileges, and you will pay for all the damages you caused to his office.”

“But I don’t even have much money, nor a job.” I said.

“Well you should’ve thought about those things too before you went berserk at the school. Go to your room now!”

As I stomped up the stairs to my room, I let out a loud, “Aaaargh!” and then followed up with, “I hate you! I hate you all! I wish you weren’t my mother at all for saying this to me!” and slammed the door on my way in. I stomped towards my bed, and sat down, crossing my arms firmly.

What I didn't realize was that what I said out loud really hurt mom's feelings. I heard her run upstairs to her room crying, while my stepfather followed her to comfort her.

I tried to go to my room door to hear what they were saying, since my parents' room is right next door to my room, and the walls are thin, which makes it easier for me to hear what is going on in there. But I decided not to, because I was still angry at them for not listening to me.

CHAPTER 7

HISTORY REPEATS

Bedtime rolled around once again, and as I was brushing my teeth, I started to get a very painful migraine. But I decided to brush it off, as I had dealt with migraines before, and this was no different. I thought that it would probably disappear in the morning.

I continued to brush my teeth for the next few minutes, and then followed that up with some rinsing, and mouthwash. But somehow, the burning sensation of mouthwash has suddenly spreaded from my mouth to my head, which has made my headache worse. So I ran into my room to lay down, hoping to cool down the pain that is in my head. But

it was no use, as the pain from my head shot down to my neck, and then to the lower half of my body, like a spreading wildfire. The pain was so unbearable that it made it difficult for me to get up from bed.

Just then, my body started to glow white, and sparkles of the same color began to appear and swirl around my room. I wasn't sure what was going on, because I had seen nothing that is this weird, yet at the same time, this scary ever in my life. Just then, the room started to shake and began to grow in an immense size, to the point that it looked like I had shrunk to the size of a cockroach. Then, a mysterious giant deity appeared in front of me, and it was none other than Lady Zhera, who looked really angry at me.

“You were warned,” she said, “You should’ve listened to me when I said do not let your own ego get the best of you. But instead, you chose to ignore me, and got into more trouble!”

I was really frightened of the way she yelled at me for ignoring her that I started to regret it.

Lady Zhera continued, “I cannot tell you how angry I am at you for rejecting my advice for your own ways of thinking of life. And because of this, you left me no choice, but to send you into your future, to see what is the outcome for that mentality of yours.”



She then fires a giant laser at my face, and transported me 30 years into the future. After the transportation I woke up with my vision really blurry, which made it hard for me to see anything. It lasted probably about a good minute. After I was able to regain my vision, and consciousness, I noticed that there was a broken wooden door in front of me, surrounded by a wall of poorly stacked bricks. I got up, and opened the door, only to see the interior of the house that looks almost similar to my house, except it's just as run down as the exterior. There were a bunch of broken shards of plates scattered all around the living room, the kitchen shelves were infested with cobwebs and dust bunnies, and there was an infestation of flies, rats, mice, and cockroaches that came crawling out of the corners and all over the dining room, eating up the rotting food that is on the table.

The sight of seeing those pests had really sickened me and it made me puke all over the floor. I really had no problem puking on the floor anyway, considering that the house reeked of vomit, and stale beer.

After I wiped my mouth with a clean paper towel, I then heard yelling coming from upstairs. I went up to investigate, and found an older, white bearded man, who happened to be my older self, wearing a white tank top, arguing with his wife through his cell phone.

He said to her, "What do you mean, we are now bankrupt?!"

His wife said, “We’re bankrupt because you failed to pay our rent on time, plus you didn’t even save any money to make any repairs to the house. Not to mention that you failed to pay for your auto insurance. I can’t believe you had the audacity to use all of the funds that are from our savings account that I made, for all of this crap behind my back.”

He eventually stepped back to his chair, and said, “Look honey, I’m sorry. I will make it up”

“Sorry is not going to cut it,” She said, “You say that to me all the time, and you didn’t keep up with those promises like you should have 5 years ago. Time and time again, you say sorry to me, and I keep seeing you do the same, if not, similar things over and over again. How can I even trust you as a wife for doing these things that would benefit our future, yet you keep rejecting the help you need from me, to the point where your spending habits have created debt that blew up our roof? You are forgetting that this puts a whole lot of pressure on me and our family as well. Can you see how stressful this is?”

“Well what are we going to do about it?” My older self asked.

“You know what?” She began, and after a long pause, she said, “I have exactly no choice but to file for divorce, and have the court sell everything that you own to pay off our debt.”

My older self began to yell at her again, and said, “No no no. You cannot do that. That is thousands of dollars worth of items and assets that I need for myself!”

“There you go again.” She said, “Talking about your money that you are supposed to share for the family, when you want it for yourself. We are now getting a divorce, and that is that! I didn’t want to do this, but I have to just for the sake of our livelihood! Now pack your bags and leave the house, and don’t call me again. Goodbye.” She hangs up.

My older self had begun to sulk on his bed, because of how devastated he was to hear the news of the divorce from his wife, plus having to sell his prized possessions, to pay off their looming debt. Because of the fact that he realized that it was too late to save his marriage, he started to weep with regret and heartbrokenness. Crystal-like tears come rushing down his face, like you see in the window when it rains. He then gets up, and starts throwing things around in his room, including pictures, collectables, jewelry, and other things that he got from his wife, his children, and from his parents. A jewelry box containing the wedding ring was heading towards me at high speed, but I was able to dodge it.

After probably about a few minutes, when he had no more things left to throw and destroy, he then falls flat on the floor, and starts bawling his eyes out. I picked up the box that was on the floor, and opened it to reveal a wedding ring that had stenciled words on it, saying, “For Christie.”



When I looked at it, I started to feel horrible for myself for making her go through the pressure. Things had gone spontaneously out of control for the both of them due to his spending habits, and his narcissistic tendencies, which almost reminded me of how my real father used to act towards me and my mother. And I now see the pattern that is forming right in front of me. I looked up and watched in agony, as I saw my older self letting out a puddle of tears all over the floor. I know he deserved it, but I didn't know that it would end up like this later on in my life. Then, after probably about a good 10 minutes, he took a few breaths to calm himself down.

The house started to crumble into dust, engulfing the wallowing man with it. I watch as the scenery fades into a large black void, the same kind of environment I was in when I met Lady Zhera the second time. As I was walking in circles, with my head down, because of the experience that I had to go through witnessing my demise, I heard some very loud footsteps coming from behind me, and indeed it sounds like they come from the Empress of Time herself.

She then stopped behind me and said, "Now you see why your attitude needs to change, human. You will not get that far in your life with that mentality, even if it's too much for you to deal with."

I never felt this low ever in my life, and I almost started crying when I realized what I was doing in my life, that would cause me to turn into a poor lost soul.

Still at a loss of words, I sat down on the white floor, and began to weep a little, like what my older self did.

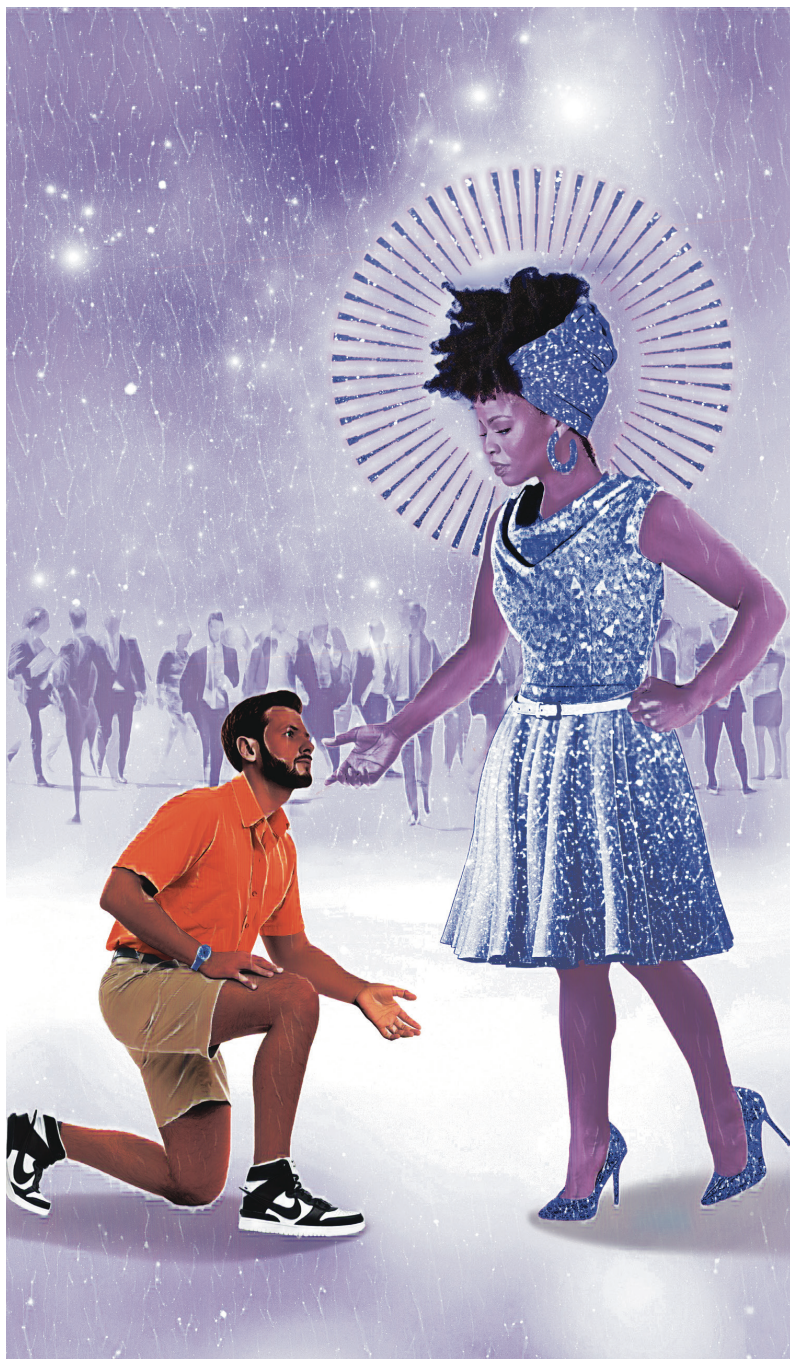
I asked, forlornly, “What... happened to my future self after the divorce?”

The queen replied, sadly, “He died...unfortunately.”

Hearing the news of what happens to my future self really made my heart sink. I felt a big knot of guilt in my stomach, due to the fact that my own attitude would probably lead to my demise.

Lady Zehra continued, “His health was compromised due to his alcoholism. Local Government officials that were sent by the debt collector found his body lying on the floor in his bedroom while they were originally going to take him to court for not paying off the debt. They rushed him down to the hospital to get him checked out. After probably about a few minutes... the doctors figured out that he had a stroke. He sustained so much damage to his brain, that it was... too late to save him.”

Not only the news saddened me more, but it has scared me.



“Is there any chance that I would prevent myself from having this fate?” I asked. “I don’t think there is for me anymore.”

“You do,” she said, while taking a knee and lifting my chin up with her two fingers, “Don’t say there isn’t. You do have another chance of redeeming yourself after what you have gone through. But it is up to you to decide what destiny you want to choose for yourself.”

“You’re right,” I said, “I cannot let this negative energy fester in me any longer. So I’m gonna have to let it all go.”

I took a very deep breath in through my nose, and as deep as my lungs would allow it. I was eagerly prepared to breathe out the tightness that was in my chest, caused by the dark energy. I breathed out the dark matter that was trapped in my soul for so long, out through my mouth. I watched the dark, cursed matter, still in a very shady hue of purple, spewing out voices that were repeated from the likes of my father, and myself, kicking up into the air of the black void, continuing to levitate into the darkness. The matter starts to fade away, and as it fades, those voices fade along with it.

“Now,” I said while taking another breath, “can you get me back down to my own realm? I have something to say to my parents.”

“Very well,” she said happily.

The queen then uses her laser beam from her crown to warp me back to my realm, where I belong.

CHAPTER 8

LET BYGONES BE BYGONES

I woke up to a very beautiful sunshine that hit my face from the window up in front of me. I knew this must be the first sign of me having a better day. I checked my calendar and the day was May 21st, on a Saturday. I was not expecting to skip so far from the time I last got into bed, in which I don't remember. But what I do remember is my promise to Lady Zehra, and I should start by going downstairs and apologizing to my parents.

So I went downstairs and called both of my parents over to the kitchen.

“Mom, Dad.” I said, knowing that I would probably make my stepdad happy when I called him dad, “come over to the Dining Room. There is something I need to tell you.”

My mother walked into the kitchen from the living room, along with my stepdad.

“What is it son?” she said.

“Yeah, what is it?” my stepfather said afterwards.

“Can you sit down?” I ordered nicely.

They proceeded to pull out their chairs and sit down. I then pulled out my own chair that was in front of me, and sat down afterwards. I took a slow deep breath, and began to speak my mind.

“Remember the time that I threw a fit in the principal’s office not too long ago? It was a sign of me being frustrated for not having anybody to listen to what I want to say about what I have to deal with in my life.” I then turned my head to my stepfather, “My birth father had severely abused both me and mom during his drunk episodes. I still cannot forget the time I watched mom get beaten to the point where she cannot move at all. Although he is now gone from my life, that little piece of my childhood still traumatizes me to this day.”

My step dad started to acknowledge where I came from, and said, “I’m... so sorry, I didn’t know you would

have to go through that.” He turned to my mother, “Mari, why didn’t you tell me that this kid is suffering earlier.”

“I didn’t know how I was supposed to tell you about it,” My mother said, “I was afraid that you might get mad at the both of us.”

I continued with my explanation, “Whenever I tried to ask for help from you, or mom, you say that you are too busy with other things, and don’t have time to help, So I had to turn to the people at school. However, they told me the same exact thing, plus most of the students there are too rude for me to even talk to them. I also have apathetic people like Kevin, who would often take advantage of my pain, to cause more trouble in my life than what I am dealing with right now.”

My mom starts to feel ashamed of herself for not realizing the damages that I had to deal with. “I get what you’re saying,” she said, “I’m sorry that I didn’t listen to you.”

“No, it’s my fault.” I said, “I should’ve listened to you when you said that I need to control my temper, when it comes to certain things such as getting into major trouble, and having to deal with the repercussions afterwards. I should be the one that is sorry.”

“No, it is absolutely my fault,” my mother said, “I should’ve paid attention to your mental health after what happened with your real father. I tried to mask my pain with my tough parenting on you, but your actions that resemble your father’s is what breaks me down, and loses my power. Then again, I didn’t know it would affect you also.” Her head begins to slump down towards the table. “I’m sorry.”

“I’m also sorry,” my step dad said, “For not acknowledging your pain from your trauma when you were little. Your real dad wasn’t the right person to even provide the love and care that you need.”

“How could you say that?” I questioned.

My stepfather begins to explain, “Your father was way too upset about his personal struggles that took away his happiness. If I could remember correctly, he used to have everything that would keep his and your mother’s finances alive and running, including his own Jewelry business, right up until the recession came. Your father had no choice but to

file for bankruptcy, which drastically lowered his finances for a long period of time. That is part of how he became the unfit and unstable father and husband that you two know.”

“You don’t really have to forgive him.” He said, “He won’t put in the effort to change if he was still alive.”

That made me feel a little better, since I now know what is the source of my emotions going through a downward spiral during the past few months. I wasn’t internally happy with myself after the whole ordeal with my father. I became insecure of other people enjoying their lives and minding their own business, because I wasn’t able to do the same. But I realized that it all comes along with enjoying life the way it is, and taking the time to understand the trauma, which I refused to do, right up until now.

My stepfather continued, “And because you took your time to tell me what you had gone through, I should say that I should hire a therapist to help you cope with your trauma. But until then, me and your mother were thinking about taking you to Stone Cold after dinner as a treat.”

I jumped and hopped around the kitchen with joy, because I’ve been dying to go to that place, ever since we passed it not too long ago.

It definitely felt great to find happiness within myself again ever since I had released the dark, cursed matter out of my body. The dark matter had caused so much pain in my heart that rendered me almost eternally miserable, but

I had the willpower to conquer my misdirected anger after seeing what it could do to me once I got older. And with that, I made it fade away from my life instead. With that gone, I now feel more bolder, smarter, and stronger than ever before. I never would've imagined receiving a gift like this. Thank you Lady Zhera, my gigantic mentor.

THE END

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

I would like to give my thanks to my father for believing in me, and my stepmother, for helping me build up my character to face the difficulties that I would face in the real world. I would also thank my SAY TA, Miranda, for helping me with the storyline of the book, as well as the graphic designers for the illustrations.

PRAISE FOR THE AUTHOR

To know Erick Sowers is to know a person who is triumphant. Erick has a unique and rare ability to identify his deepest truths, process his past, and articulate his emotions. He uses these pillars of his personhood to guide his keen artistic eye, to produce powerful creations which he gloriously shares with the world. His generous art settles in our collective mind and changes us - this is the definition of a true artist.

-KATE, SAY Director of Confident Voices

Erick Sowers has a brilliant imagination and is an absolute truth-teller, a combination which makes him a thrilling writer to read. *The Significance of Redemption* is a beautiful expression of who he is - honest, vulnerable and endlessly creative. Erick is a gifted performer, a skilled musician, and someone who commits deeply to anything that he does. He has big dreams and ambitions, and I have no doubt that he will get to where he wants to go. It has been a true pleasure to get to know this incredible young man over the past few years, and I am endlessly grateful that he continues to share himself so openly with this community and the world.

-AIDAN, SAY Artistic Director of Confident Voices

Erick Sowers has the unique capability to instantly transport the reader into the vivid and colorful landscape of his imagination, and what a joy it is to visit! The author has bravely and boldly chosen to share the depths of his spirit in these words, and the vulnerability showcased in these pages is remarkable. *The Significance of Redemption* is sure to captivate the reader with this coming-of-age tale about a young man's journey towards self-discovery, healing, and, ultimately, redemption. I am made more by the time I shared with Erick and I am so grateful for the opportunity to have worked with him.

-MIRANDA, SAY Writing Mentor and Teaching Artist

Erick is a deep, thoughtful young man who exudes creativity in all he does. His performances are so rich and exciting. He is the type of actor all directors want to work with because he throws his whole self into his characters and lights up the stage. He is a true artist who does it all: voice actor, musician, and storyteller! I am in awe of his dedication to the craft and excited to continue following his career.

-LAURA, SAY Teaching Artist

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Erick Sowers is a Thomas Edison CTE High School Graduate, who is about to start his College career to get a Bachelor's Degree in Mechanical Engineering. He was born on March 17th, 2003. He had to face a similar situation that Arthur experienced when he was a child. His mother was verbally abusive to him and his father to the point where his father decided to take full custody of him and his brothers, to ensure their safety and well-being. He is also known for his songs, "Yin and Yang", and "Crutches of my Past" and his short plays, "Wild Goose Chase in the Subway" and "Double Trouble."