

Dear William Ernest Henley,

For the longest time I didn't realize how much of an impact I would have on my own life. Whether or not it was little things or big things that made the difference, they were enough to have an effect. It was funny because for the longest time I had trouble figuring out how I could control my path. I always thought my parents and teachers were the ones that would magically guide me in the right direction. It took me a bit of growing up to realize I chose my own path. Growing up I have dealt with several domestic issues like abuse and neglect. There were so many things that could have easily made me snap. I was born to my mom and dad, but for the longest time my dad wasn't in the picture. I was all on my own. I had to raise my brothers because my mother was too busy being a druggie instead of a role model. I missed out on so many memories, so many pieces of advice that should have been given to me for the future. My dad only kind of showed himself, and my mother continued to be stuck in her own world. And year after year the bricks piled onto my back, and I felt guilty, as though I was the one causing this.

Now that I'm older I realize, how can a young child possibly be damaging his own life? It wasn't until I read your poem, "Invictus", four years ago that I realized that I wasn't the creator of this mess, I was a victim. But, it was up to me to take charge of my life and not let all of these horrible tragedies bring me down. Day after day, and year after year, from birth to my early teenage years, I faced several tasks that would break me down and completely disintegrate all of my hopes and dreams. I read your poem and vowed that that was enough. It was my life and I was going to lead it in a different direction. I wasn't going to let the darkness take hold of my life and destroy my way of living. It was a matter of make or break. This decision was the hardest I have made in my life, and considering I was pretty young then, about eleven, making those decisions was enough to amaze me. I took the liberty of taking complete control. No one was getting in the way of that. They were either against or in assistance. I had officially become the captain of my soul, and the master of my fate.

I am now a fifteen year old teenage boy, living in Spokane, Washington. I plan to take on all forms of national competition for cross country, and be the best I can possibly be for my team, family, community, and myself. I also have the ultimate goal of going to college. Overall, I have completely changed my mindset. Throughout my life, I have been held captive in the darkness, and it's been terribly long. The tides have taken their toll, and enough is enough. The light is on, and I move onward. I have high goals and dreams to accomplish. I have people to meet and places to go. The darkness shall never again hold me back. Mr. Henley, your poem has turned my life right side up. I wake up every morning and I think about those last two lines, "I am the master of my fate: I am the captain of my soul", and I know right away that I choose the path. I cannot thank you enough for how you have transformed my mindset.

Sincerely,

Oliver Reed