

THE  
**UNWORTHY  
MOTHER**



**ERIC RIVERNIGHT**

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**Visit the author's website at [www.eric-rivernight.com](http://www.eric-rivernight.com)**

## Introduction

This ebook is a depiction of my therapy sessions between the age of 19 and 28. I sought professional help when I became schizophrenic and unresponsive to daily conversations. I've been a subject to psychological torture since the age of 5 by my parents. I wrote this short biography to encourage anyone to find help and hopefully recover after a long painful journey.

## Chapter One: The Voices

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It was June 7<sup>th</sup> 2007, I was nineteen, my writing teacher waited until everyone left class to share few words with me. She had been noticing for quite some time that I was drawing in class, and that I was partially paying attention to the course. Before I got up to leave, she remarked on the drawing more than my behaviour or my tired face that I never seemed to hide.

I figured that I was in trouble, so I apologized immediately fearing my parent's intervention in this predicament. She didn't draw attention to it; instead, she further elaborated her fascination on the drawing. I gradually opened up to her questions, not realising that my longing for a normal conversation became more apparent as the seconds went by.

And then, a moment of silence slipped in quite suddenly... Before I could say anything to break the unease, her face relaxed to welcome a serious stare, and she asked the following question:

"How often do you talk to them?"

Startled by the unexpected, I first thought she was referring to my classmates. So I simply replied, "Everyone else has better things to do than having conversations with me. I don't mind, actually."

The teacher briefly looked aside in attempt to find the strength to break the ice and restored her attention back to me.

"I wasn't talking about the students," she corrected. "I meant... the voices."

I froze in bewilderment. Hiding my discomfort became the most challenging thing I ever did at that moment. I never had anyone accurately predict events occurring in my mind, especially when people preferred to label me in one gaze than extending an olive branch.

The teacher adjusted her shoulders, leaned against her desk to face me with crossed arms.

"I know it is not my place to make unfounded statements," she continued. "I've seen you whispering to yourself. I initially assumed you were rehearsing or memorizing passages from the book. But from where I stood, it looked like you were having an argument with someone."

The instant she finished speaking, I scratched the back of my right hand and attempted, once again, to rise up from my chair and leave. The following statement stopped me right away.

"I used to hear them too, you know," she confessed. "A very long time ago. Quite regularly, if I were to be frank. I had gotten so used to it, that I purposely threw myself into arguments with people to feed the noise in my mind. Because nothing else in the world could match this hyper awareness."

She paused to carefully choose her words.

"You don't know what it's like, do you?" she rhetorically asked. "You don't know what it's like to experience true silence. I didn't, until I found help. I'm guessing someone in your life is pressuring you to feel less than what your worth? And you've been hearing their voices so much, that even when you're far away from them, it lingers in the back of your head... like a pulse?"

I remained speechless. The closest way that I could describe my situation at the time with one word was "exposed". It didn't take me long to also notice the very brief absence of the voices during the exchange. Surprisingly, her kindness wasn't my awakening. Several weeks after our conversation, I started hitting my head against my bedroom door, repeatedly insulting myself. I called myself 'stupid' before each collision, because that was the one word my family used to shut down any conversation. I hit my head so hard, that I briefly lost any feeling through my arms. I felt my veins gradually disconnecting

any sensation around that area. And if there's one thing I couldn't live without, it was my ability to draw. There was no way I would allow my depression to replace the feeling of holding a pencil in my hand. Every stroke I've ever created on paper reinforced the protective walls of my imagination, my safe zone. And without my safe zone, I was nothing more than a slave to my family's twisted agenda.

Soon after describing my awakening to my therapist, I was asked to trace the very first memory of their misconduct towards me. For that, I had to describe what my mother and father were to each other, as a couple, as people, as strangers.

For as long as I could remember, my mother and father were never truly together. My father lived in London. My mother, my sister and I lived in Brussels. I saw my father twice in my entire life, once when I was six and once when I was eight. My father was the kind of person who would sleep around without any shred of remorse, but my mother nevertheless loved him. The reason being was the fact that he was a provider from a long distance. Lack of self-respect is a generous way to describe my mother, my father relished upon her desperation shamelessly.

I was six-years-old when I saw him dragged out of the house by the police with handcuffs. My mother made the call when she believed her life was threatened. The next day, she dropped all charges and let him return to England. My mother used my sister and I as a bargaining chip for her marriage:

Occasional monthly phone calls with his children in return for money.

For a very long time, I thought she called the police for her protection... But in reality, she was teaching me a lesson. She wanted me to know that she was one phone call away to put me back in line if I ever misbehaved. And it worked, each time when I had bad grades in school. She would beat me and then she would walk by the phone, hovering her hand above it. She didn't even have to say anything; standing right next to it would do the job. My mother once beat me for far less than bad grades.

I once made the mistake of losing my new crayons in the school yard, where kids eventually kept them to themselves. Of course, in my mother's mind, I needed to understand the value of money at a very young age.

As for the monthly conversations with my father, well, it was no different. He would threaten to come to Brussels and beat me too if I ever disrespected my mother. He never had the chance to lay a hand on me, until I was eight-years-old, the second and last time I saw him... in London.

One afternoon, he sent my sister and I to the grocery shop for eggs and milk. Being the clumsy boy that I was, I broke an egg on the way to his house. The moment he found out about it, he beat me unconscious for five minutes while my seven-year-old sister smiled above me. Yes, that's right. I was pretty much isolated during my entire childhood. For some odd reason, between the two children of the family, I was designated to be the punching bag of stress release. My sister grew up to be as manipulative as my mother, and I grew up to be tormented and torn apart.

In this long therapy session, I unknowingly balanced my shoulders sideways as my gaze drifted away from the person in front of me. My therapist stopped writing on her board and paid attention to my weak posture. She suggested that I should probably reschedule the session in fear of taking too much of my time and effort. I quickly redirected my focus towards her, and denied the offer.

I was then asked to explain my isolation in detail. The idea of me refusing to say anything to anyone for so long made her curious. She couldn't understand why I never defended myself or reached out to people about my situation.

I simply told her that my mother pulled the one trick she perfected for years...

My mother made me believe that she never hit me or insulted me for as long as I was alive. She succeeded doing this by planning yearly summer camp periods. She would send me there, where people

would treat me far better than she ever would, hoping I would be brainwashed by the time I returned home. And it worked... I thought to myself, my mother can't be all that bad, because she allowed me to be welcomed in a happier place.

And the impossible happened... I gradually started rewriting my memories as the voices increased in volume.

They were all saying the same thing:

*“If you find a reason to hate your parents, then you're the evil one! They left you here, amongst happy people. Who are you to be unappreciative? They never beat you! You injured yourself, remember? You're very clumsy.”*

I even managed to forget that my mother tormented me for a long time when I thought I lost my glasses at the age of 12. I confessed this concern to her with full honesty. She forced me to look for them knowing I couldn't see anything clearly. I left them on the couch and she mocked me for not being able to spot them immediately. She put an end to my anxiety by pointing its location. And of course, she reminded me that if I ever lose them again, I would receive a beating and I would have to pay for a new pair with my imaginary money.

I also managed to forget that she would send me late in the evening to the local night shop, so that I can buy her some alcohol. Even when I explicitly said to her that there were thugs with knives hanging around that place.

I managed to forget that my mother would occasionally ask me to repair broken items of hers when she could just replace it, instead of spending money on wine.

I managed to forget that she would often ask me to write professional letters for bills and such, when she could just take the time to learn how to do it herself.

I managed to forget that she forced me, at the age of 14, to undress outside of the changing rooms of a clothing store, because all the rooms were taken. I was left with my underwear. And yes, people watched me do it. They were all too embarrassed to tell my mother it was wrong...

I managed to forget that her threat “wait until we get home, you'll see what I will do to you”, made me wish she would put a bullet in my head instead.

That's how much I was brainwashed...

This is how far I went to prove my “love” to her. When I was 13, I went on Michael Bolton's website. Michael Bolton is one of her favourite singers. I e-mailed his company to request a fan autograph for my mother. His company kindly accepted and sent me the item in question. I personally didn't expect anything from a major celebrity. My expectations were none existent. Once I received the item, I gave the envelope with the autographed picture in it to her. The picture was so large, that the mailman had to fold it to place it in the mailbox. My mother complained about me “not thinking ahead”. She suggested that I should have requested a smaller item because she has a damaged autograph...

Who in their right mind would behave that way?

## Chapter Two: Wearing A Mask

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My therapy sessions went on for several years. After graduating from high school, I attended art school to major in animation and visual effects. From there, I was able to expand my desire to create new worlds, worlds that I could see myself escaping to.

Many of you reading this would wonder how I was able to remain stable without ever breaking. I mean, it is known to many that anyone suffering through schizophrenia have a hard time hiding their traits. And you would be right. I went through several public breakdowns that weren't easy to hide. Concealing obvious traits of my unstable behaviour was very difficult. Then of course, just like in most situations involving mental illness, I became a subject of mockery and humiliation.

But I do have to say that I'm not an innocent person. I went looking for trouble whenever I could because I felt undeserving of anyone's love or friendship. I had gotten so used to not having things my way that I went on provoking people who weren't even aware that I ever existed.

I was now known as the 'psycho student', even my teachers knew about it. Whatever self-respect I had left, I threw it out the window. I wore an unfazed look during those three years of college without considering improving my social skills. After a while, those who would mock me for a cheap laugh got tired. And I got even more tired as the months went by.

There was this one memory of my mother's cruelty that I had continuously denied, until I couldn't anymore. So I had to let it out at some point and describe it as it was back then.

I told my therapist that I recalled a very early memory as a four-year-old. Till this day, the images still haunts me. The school yard was deserted, but for some reason that escapes me, I decided to spend most of my time there. I was wearing sandals that day, because it was summer and my regular shoes didn't fit me anymore. A couple of fifteen-year-olds saw me through the windows and thought it would be a great idea to bully me. They gradually entered the yard one by one to surround me.

At first, they didn't do anything in particular. They just stood still. Not knowing what they wanted from me, I developed the desire to leave the yard.

I took several steps to exit the circle, but one kid in the group pushed me back. Feeling threatened, I picked another side to run away, but another kid pushed me back. That went on for several minutes until I got really frustrated and kicked the ground really hard. I kicked it so hard that I broke my toe. Blood was coming out of it. It goes without saying that I yelled at the top of my lungs. The kids were terrified and fled the scene immediately. A responsible person eventually entered the yard, took me to a safe space and called an ambulance.

My mother got summoned to the hospital and arrived there as soon as she could. Instead of being thankful that I wasn't dead, she was angry that I was 'playing' with older kids. Till this day, I haven't fully recovered from my injury because I can't feel my left toe. It's like having a small wooden object attached to my foot where my toe used to be. I can definitely move it here and there, but my toe is unresponsive to pain or pleasure.

My mother used that story time and time again to remind me that even at a very young age, I was disobedient.

After confessing this horrible memory to my therapist, she asked me a very unusual question I had trouble answering. I eventually found the strength to develop an accurate answer that would suit me.

The question was:

“If this was the earliest memory of your mother’s hatred towards you, why didn’t you start our sessions with that?”

That answer is... I can’t feel anything from my left toe. Somehow, the lack of any sensation from that area played with my recollection. Each time I touch it to put a sock on, for example, the absence of any feeling reshapes the images in my head. The memory only haunts me each time I’m in the waiting room of a clinic or hospital. For some odd reason, I think I can feel my left toe again, an irritation of sort. The medical setting recreates the narrative of my past, nothing else does.

Years went by, and my therapist knew me enough to realise that I was still hiding important things from her. Even though she was right, I myself couldn’t recollect any more trauma or hidden fears. She suggested that we would temporally suspend our sessions until an urgent desire would flood my mind.

So I did exactly that. Two weeks went by, four weeks went by, and then two whole months went... nothing came into my recollection. I didn’t understand why, and I certainly didn’t feel cured or somewhat normal. I was hesitant to reconnect with my therapist. I almost abandoned the idea of getting help until it happened. I remembered something, perhaps the most important thing I hid from myself.

I showed up at her office, more anxious than ever, and I finally came to the conclusion of my mental state.

“I don’t know who I am,” I confessed to her. “I never got the chance to discover the real Eric. I’ve been my mother’s punching bag and greatest disappointment for so long, that planting a seed of my personality became absurd. I have been her puppet, her slave, her object of scrutiny for as long as I can remember that nothing else mattered to me. Every nervous tick, stressful fear, lack of interest in life came from her.”

I was twenty-eight when I came to this realisation...

That was the day that I finally told my mother everything through e-mail, a very long e-mail. Why not face to face, some of you may ask? My mother had perfected the art of avoidance for years. She always wanted things her way and only her way. Reading an explicit text from her son would require patience, focus and understanding, skills that none of which she possessed.

It didn’t shock me to find out that she played the victim card, turning to other family members for help. She had them do her bidding for her: calling me excessively, having one of them ring my doorbell hoping I would answer.

Accepting that she wasn’t the centre of attention had to be terrifying for her, because for the first time, her threats expired long after I moved out.



## Chapter Three: Awakening

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Shhh... listen... Can you hear it?

Exactly...

The sound without sound, the steps without ground,  
I'm ascending high above, like a king without crown.  
It happened... It finally happened.

The noise in my head, the ones that never fled,  
Were nowhere to be found, I can finally go to bed.

I've walked upon a path, without guidance or stability.  
I surely done the math, I was petrified with liberty.  
To have so many choices, far ahead or in proximity.  
Made me miss the voices, that I once called culpability.

At the very least, my former guilt, forced me to be vigilant.  
Away from any beast, avoiding jilt, made me innocent.  
People do not scare me, or their personal desire.  
I want to be judge fairly, before the day I retire.

I chose to never bury, nor hide any mistakes.  
Because the one thing that is scary, is lying beyond the stakes.  
To be brave, while building any friendship until it breaks.  
Makes you question why your courage is kind of useless, for God's sakes.

All the effort you ever had, to keep them in your life.  
Sort of made you look bad, while you're succumbing to your wrath.  
The anger grows and grows, when you should be moving on.  
The world already knows, that you had nothing going on.

You can pretend all you want, or you can choose to be blunt,  
The problem is here, there's nothing else to confront,

## Chapter Four: When Pain Becomes Art

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Over the past few years, I have managed to create a bridge between my pain and my art. I wrote several novels further elaborating depression, insecurity and uncontrollable rage. Coming up with characters who are very much misunderstood is basically my strength.

For example, I created the character of Audwin from *Closet Friends* after several heart surgeries that I went through in the winter of 2008. I suffered from Wolff-Parkinson White syndrome. I was born with an extra vein connected to my heart that randomly increased the palpitation. These palpitations caused several fainting occurrences in my life. The weirdest part about it is that I never remembered falling. I would sometimes wake up on the floor, wondering what happened.

I was very much in denial for quite some time. It didn't help that the vein kept regenerating after each operation, which made me feel hopeless. But what truly made me feel alone, was the fact that only one person from my college ever called to ask whether the surgery went well.

This is exactly what happened to Audwin in *Closet Friends*.

It's really difficult to realize what the right thing to do is when you had parents providing everything for you and using this fact as a threat. My mother kept me in line for many years by saying:

“Go ahead; the door is right there if you want to leave! It's not like you know anything about being responsible, paying taxes, holding on to a job. You're just a stupid person who feels entitled to anything without ever committing to something that matters. Your soul is rotten to the core.”

At that point, staying quiet becomes the only alternative. But this is where it gets really dark, and I'm even ashamed to confess. While I was still living with my mother, there were several nights I planned a suicide. I won't go much into the details, but the fridge was involved in this attempt and me calling the police after I was done.

I simply didn't want my last memory to be the face of my tormentor; I wanted to be the faces of strangers attempting to resuscitate me as I fade away into the darkness. I thought it would have made dying easier if one last act of kindness became the only image printed in my brain.

I put an end to my plans when I came to notice how many people out there felt as alone as I did. I soon regretted my dark thoughts, committed to writing stories and reshaping the world as I see fit.