



Self-Help

Drawing out the Dragons: A Meditation on Art, Destiny and the Power of Choice

James A. Owen

Shadow Mountain

978-1-60907-368-8

(March 12, 2013)

In an autobiographical meditation brimming with exuberance and hope, StarChild comic book creator James A. Owen seeks to show how we can all harness our potential and become luminaries in the world—and he has the experience to back it up.

Owen’s story contains no shortage of potentially catastrophic incidents. To his credit, and to the reader’s delight, he relates these with both tranquility and humor. He first recalls the event that nearly ended his budding career, when an errant young driver turned into his car and crushed his drawing hand. For a man whose work revolved around illustrations, the injury had potential for ruination. Yet Owen heads this prologue with the curious reflection, “the real tragedy was that I’d finally figured out [how to tune] the radio.” Cue audience devotion.

This is not just another story of incredible perseverance in the face of immense challenges, although it contains those elements. Owen, on his probable death bed at age eleven, reads a reimagined Superman tale and resolves that he is going to live to contribute meaningfully to the world. He does.

Owen, at sixteen, decides that he’s going to start a printing press to actualize his dreams of comic book greatness despite outside resistance. He does. Owen, in his early twenties, sells everything to pursue a job in Ireland. Down to a dollar in his pocket, he pushes connected aspirations into reality here, as well.

How Owen manages to relate these triumphs without making his audience feel comparatively meek is a wonder, but he does this, too. And all of his experiences are shared to push one persistent encouragement: “if you really want to do something, no one can stop you.”

Owen is convinced, and seeks to infect his audience with the conviction, that life is, indeed, composed of a series of choices. If one resolves—really resolves—to achieve some daunting goal, it can be achieved, without exception or condition. Owen counts the times he was told “no” or “impossible,” notes that he never accepted such repudiations as absolute, and

relates how he wrangled incredible personal success—all on the steam of personal resolution.

So, too, can we all forge our personal success stories, Owen insists. We can reject the temptations of regret and fear, without which “there’s nothing left but possibility and joy.” We can actualize our grandest dreams, and bring them to bear for the good of humanity. These are lofty propositions, but Owen delivers them with such charm and conviction that readers will find it difficult to escape his enchantment. This work is an astounding manifesto for creativity, sure to alternately move and inspire its readers.

Michelle Anne Schingler