

Beyond the Threshold: Hero's Path Series: Book Two

Mark Ristau

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In Mark Ristau's brilliant psychological novel *Beyond the Threshold*, a man grapples with his untreated childhood traumas.

After a summer camp experience left him marred, Ricky is sick of being picked on, and he's tired of feeling different. No one seems to see, or understand, how damaged he is. One morning, Ricky wakes from a familiar, terrifying dream, goes for a run, and encounters a younger version of himself who's been left for dead in the cold waters of a nearby lake. Ricky takes the mysterious child home, leading him to reflect on his entire life. His younger counterpart guides him through his flashbacks, with stops in his high school years, which were marked by bullying; his relationships, in which he failed to form lasting connections; and the hell of law school.

The personification of Ricky's inner child is a compelling element of this psychological drama. Ricky's younger self tries to help him, sharing visions of the pain that Ricky's planned revenge would result in. His insights on the past help Ricky to recover his humanity. Together, the man and the boy begin to reimagine what their lives could be like had Ricky made different choices and forgiven others. But they have to contend with a third, more dangerous voice who craves destruction. As the conflict in Ricky's soul grows, he takes the steps to build a bomb; but he also begins to understand how his traumas morphed him. His ultimate choice has propulsive implications.

In the affecting novel *Beyond the Threshold*, trauma changed a boy's life; as a man, he learns that it's possible to recover.

JEREMIAH ROOD (September / October 2022)

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