

To Whom it May Concern,

My name is Zachary Steele, author of the novel, *The Weight of Ashes* (The Story Plant), due for release, July 13<sup>th</sup>, 2021. At its core, it is a story of coping with grief and loss, told from the vantage of 13-year-old Mark Murphy, following the death of his older brother.

Though a work of fiction, *The Weight of Ashes* is very much a real piece of my life, offering access to the emotional truths of my struggle with grief and loss, while granting readers a relatable character and struggle they might identify with. Mark's journey in *The Weight of Ashes* is filtered through a lens of pure innocence and hope, which feeds his denial. It's only through the experience on the pages that he can find his way through the stages of grief. As with any emotional struggle, acceptance is the doorway to recovery. I hope this story opens that door for those who need the help.

My own grief is by no means unique. We've all experienced it, and will many times over going forward. But the opportunity to speak my experiences through story, through character, through shared struggle is one, I hope, that can open a dialogue with others, encourage the sharing of stories of those we've lost, and open others to a community mindset toward healing and education.

With *The Weight of Ashes*, I hope to specifically reach teens and younger adults who are seeking a way to process and understand grief. We tend to forget, as adults, that younger minds have yet to fully experience and learn to cope with life and its myriad struggles, even if they suggest otherwise. But this isn't just a story for teens. It's a story for everyone. Myself included. Witnessing grief through another's viewpoint has helped to process the losses in my life. To learn. To move beyond the grief I felt, even if the pain remains.

Sincerely,



Zachary Steele