

**CHANGING HIGH SCHOOL INTO MEDICINE  
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SEATTLE**

**Devadatta's changing the Avichi hell into the blissful Land of Tranquil Light, and the Dragon King's Daughter's attaining Buddhahood without changing her form, were nothing other than [the realization that Hell becomes the Land of Tranquil Light for those who embrace the Lotus Sutra]. (*The Writings of Nichiren Daishonin*, p. 457)**

Looking back on my high school years, I clearly remember the deep sadness, isolation and self-loathing that I felt every day. In truth, I don't recall much else from that time. I felt nearly invisible, insubstantial as a ghost, and incapable of really mattering to anyone. Nevertheless, I did have a few friends, though I often suspected that they only kept me around because I listened well when they voiced their own pains. And when I expressed my fears and occasional hopes in poetry and stories, I assumed the favorable reactions I got were just patronizing courtesy.

Since then, I have grown quite a bit. My practice is consistent now and my self-esteem is stronger than ever before. I have many friends whom I cherish profoundly, including a couple from high school.

When I found out about our 10-year reunion, I was eager to attend. I figured that maybe only a couple people would remember me, but it would still be worth it.

I was not at all prepared for what happened. Throughout the night, many old friends told me how happy they were to see me. Did I still write poetry? Was I ever published? They all wanted to know!

One by one, they told me that my stories and poems were among their most treasured memorabilia. In fact, one guy told me he is now a poet, and whenever he reads poetry magazines he looks for my name, hoping to see the one who inspired him.

The above quote may seem an odd accompaniment to my experience, but like Devadatta and the Dragon King's Daughter, once the hell inside me had changed, it was as if the fears of worthlessness had never existed. In one night, years of pain were scattered like dust. I could see, for the first time, all the beauty I had created.