

**LEON ROLLE** LOCKSMITH  
FROM RUDIMENTAL  
+ **DEREK OWUSU**

# ABOUT THIS BOY

GROWING UP  
MAKING MISTAKES  
AND BECOMING

**ME**



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**ABOUT  
THIS  
BOY**

WALKER  
BOOKS

First published 2022 by Walker Books Ltd  
87 Vauxhall Walk, London SE11 5HJ

2 4 6 8 10 9 7 5 3 1

Text © 2022 Leon Rolle and Derek Owusu  
Calligraphy © 2022 Walker Books  
Calligraphy by Kevin Rooi

Front cover photograph © 2022 Cesar Antonis  
Portrait (of Leon Rolle) by Double or Nothing Productions

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This book has been typeset in Sabon, Futura,  
Clarendon and Sensory Overload

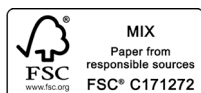
Printed and bound by CPI Group (UK) Ltd, Croydon CR0 4YY

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British Library Cataloguing in Publication Data:  
a catalogue record for this book  
is available from the British Library

ISBN 978-1-5295-0062-2

[www.walker.co.uk](http://www.walker.co.uk)



*For my eleven-year-old son, Leonyedus.*  
*This book is my personal gift to you in the hope that it*  
*will have a positive impact on your journey through life.*  
*Love you for ever, best friends, promise! – L.R.*

*For Berthy – D.O.*

**YOUR  
EMOTIONS  
DON'T  
CONTROL  
YOU**



**It was July 2015 and I'd just stepped out onto the stage at Wembley Stadium with my band mates to hear everyone screaming the lyrics to one of our songs. The lights were really bright. The crowd looked like 90,000 shadows moving around with the music. But if I squinted, I could see some faces.**

I was sweating. My shirt was stuck to my body, and there were so many more songs to go. When I left the stage, it would look like I'd jumped into a swimming pool with my clothes on. My band mates were around me, and I was jumping up and down with the mic in my hand. It was an amazing feeling. I loved it.

Out of the thousands of people who come to my concerts, I always look like I'm having the most fun. When I'm on stage, I feel in control of everything. If I stop the music, people will stop moving. If I shout

into the microphone and ask the crowd to do something, they will do it. It's the best feeling in the world. But it's a performance. I'm putting on a show: it feels like I could step out of my body and watch myself.

When I was a young boy, it was the same. My emotions have always been so strong, but because I was always confident in front of people, no one had a clue I was hiding this turbulence inside. So, I felt alone.

I grew up in an area called Hackney, in East London. It was one of those loud places. Every time you walked down the street, people would be talking like we all wanted to hear their conversation. There were no mobile phones back then so everyone spoke face to face, and the streets always looked busy with people.

I lived with my mum and my two sisters. (My dad had lots of kids so I had more brothers and sisters too, but they didn't live with us. And my dad wasn't in the picture either.) Our house was as busy inside as the streets were outside. This meant I always had a mini audience around me, and I played to it.



We all have that cousin or sibling who we secretly think is a show-off. That was probably me. You could put me in front of any crowd of people, and I would feel confident and in control while I was performing. The word performing is important because it means that you're not really being you. That's how you could describe me when I'm in front of people or a crowd.

I've never had an issue standing up in front of people. When I was younger, I wasn't performing music as such, but I was always happy to get up and dance around and get the party started. But it was like someone else took me over, like I was two people in one. When I was in front of a group of people, it was as though there was a smaller version of myself hiding inside me. Probably curled into a ball. Probably sad and lonely. And angry. No one would know about him except me. Often no one looked for the real me behind the performance, and that made me feel angry and alone, which had a big impact on my behaviour.

The first time my emotions exploded was in Year Three. You don't really do much in Year Three and the teachers are so happy

there isn't much to be upset by. Except if you have a Jamal in your year. Jamal was always moving about and fiddling with stuff. He couldn't keep his hands off things. And that included me. He didn't bully me, but he got on my nerves on purpose.

He loved to do things to get me upset.

If he walked behind me, he would try and step on the back of one of my shoes so it came off.

Annoying.

He would poke me while I was trying to listen to our teacher read us a story.

Annoying.

Or he would flick my ear when I was working.

So annoying.

I would walk to the toilets and cry. That's how I dealt with it. Sitting on a toilet seat with my hands covering my eyes. I thought I was upset at how he was treating me. But I think they were hot tears of anger that I couldn't control what was happening to me and my emotional reaction to it.

There was one week when Jamal had been doing a lot to me. More than usual. It

was like nonstop. And, finally, I decided it was enough.

I thought about what I was going to do to Jamal all weekend. I even daydreamed about hiding a pair of scissors in my sock and then if he came near me, I would pull them out. He would be scared and leave me alone. But I could never do that in real life. It was stupid and wrong. Instead, I decided that I was going to fight him if he came up to me in class.

I was so angry when I got to school on Monday. I had been angry all through Saturday and Sunday, and by school, I was ready to explode with it. I knew by getting ready to fight Jamal I was preparing to do something wrong, but I didn't care. I wanted to be left alone, and I couldn't see any other way to make that happen.

For some reason, that day Jamal didn't bother me as much as usual. Maybe he could sense I was fed up. Then, finally, he walked up to me, but before he said anything or tried to touch me, I grabbed him. I threw him on the floor and I was pulling at his clothes and dragging him around. I was screaming

too. I must have looked crazy. I'm a bit embarrassed to be telling you this now, to be honest, but at the time I just felt so mad, and I didn't know how to handle it.

The teachers ran over and pulled me off him. I was crying again, like I often did, but this time I knew exactly why. I was angry. Angry with Jamal but angrier with myself for not being able to control my reactions to what he was doing.

And that was the beginning of many angry outbursts.

My behaviour at school got bad. I would go from being confident and happy to trying to trash our classroom. And it was always small things that set me off. Like someone taking my pencil case. And then I would pick up chairs and throw them all over the room. Other kids were sent out so that I could be controlled. But that wasn't easy. I must have seemed like the Incredible Hulk or something. The teachers were confused. Even the ones that understood me. They would try and talk me out of my anger and help me get control of my emotions. But it only lasted until the next time someone upset me.

And it wasn't just happening at school but on the football pitch too.

You probably know me for my music, but football has been part of my life since I can remember. It was my first passion, my first love. You could say I was born dribbling, and I would play football any chance I got. I loved it. Playing at the weekend was the highlight of my week, until everything started getting out of control. It was a confrontation with a ref that made me realize that my emotional outbursts needed to be sorted out.

I can't remember who we were playing, but I remember we were losing. The ref kept on making bad calls and it was getting on my nerves. Someone would jump into a tackle with two feet and he wouldn't even touch his whistle. But if I got the ball with fair foot action, it felt like he was blowing in my ear. *Beep beep beep*. It was like he was trying to annoy me on purpose. I could feel the anger burning inside me and still he kept blowing his whistle – *beep beep beep* – until I wanted to scream or throw something.

Finally, I couldn't take it any more.

I ran over to him and started shouting.

“You don’t know what you’re doing. You’re an idiot!” I was this little kid telling this grown man he was useless at his job.

He blew his whistle again to order me off the pitch. *Beep beep beep*.

And I lost it. I got so angry; it all happened in a second. It felt like I wasn’t in control of anything. I started kicking him over and over. Can you believe that? And I was screaming at him and I couldn’t stop. “You’re an idiot. I hate you!” I kept saying.

The ref didn’t fight back. He was just trying to get me off him, but the more he tried to stop me, the harder and faster I kicked. I was still fighting him when some adults watching the game came to help. I was kicking so much that they had to pin me to the floor to try and calm me down, and that made me madder.

“Why are you holding me down?” I shouted.

“Because you tried to fight the referee!” one of my team-mates said. “You can’t do that!”

There were all these shocked faces staring at me, all these people I played football with every week. People I liked and cared about, and it was too much. I was ashamed of

my behaviour and my temper, and I knew I couldn't keep doing this. I had to understand why I was behaving like this and to try and change. I wasn't just letting my team down; I was letting myself down.

But where was my anger coming from and why could I not control my emotions?

After thinking about it as hard as I could, I decided it wasn't my fault. It was because I didn't have a dad. With one of my parents missing, I was like half a person. How could I control my emotions if I wasn't a complete person?

For a while that made things better, because I felt I wasn't responsible for my behaviour. If I got upset and cried, it was because of him. If I threw chairs and kicked people, it was because of him. If I said a swear word or shouted, I blamed him.

Then one day, after another outburst at school, my mum sat me down and talked to me. "Leon," she said, "you have to stop this."

I could feel myself getting upset. I was like a can of Coke being shaken up. "It's not my fault," I said. "It's because of Dad. If he was here, I'd be fine."

She thought about this for a moment and then said, “If your dad isn’t here, how can he teach you to do bad things and be angry?”

I didn’t know the answer to that, so I crossed my arms and pretended not to listen. In reality, I was listening really hard. This was the first time I’d felt properly heard in a long time.

“Do you blame your dad for all the good things about you as well as the bad?” she asked.

“No,” I said immediately. Dad wasn’t about. He didn’t deserve credit for anything I did. And suddenly I understood. *I* needed to take responsibility for my actions. I couldn’t blame a shadow or an invisible person. No one was in control of me except me. And I could control me. I just had to learn how to do it.

And that was the beginning of a real change in me.

It took time. Nothing happens overnight.

But after that, when I got upset or angry, I would replay what had happened in my head and I would ask myself what I could have done differently. Then the next time I would



try to stop and think before I let my emotions take over.

I also worked on learning to open up and express myself. I wish I'd talked to people earlier, especially my mum. I was so mad at my dad that I didn't realize my mum had been there for me all along. My dad not being in my life hurt me, but I wish I could have seen that having one parent who cared and listened was more than enough. Then maybe I wouldn't have tried to fight that referee. And maybe I wouldn't have thrown chairs or tried to beat up Jamal.

But I had the key now. The first key on my journey to becoming Locksmith.



I want to share a secret with you: I still get mad and cry sometimes. I still let my emotions get the better of me now and then. And there's nothing wrong with that. That's normal.

But now I ask myself why I am crying, or why I am mad. What emotion am I feeling? Am I responsible for it, and if not, how do I take back control in this situation and not feel attacked by the feelings making me react like this?






And you can do that too. It will help you to understand yourself better and that will make new or difficult situations easier to deal with. Talking to people who love and care about you will help too.

Remember, change takes time, so don't expect anything to happen overnight, but slowly you can look at how you've reacted to things and you can decide how you want to be different in the future.



We'd love to hear  
what you thought of

**ABOUT  
THIS  
BOY**

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**LEON ROLLE** was born and raised in Hackney, London. He formed the worldwide platinum-selling music band Rudimental with three childhood friends in 2010. He is also a skilled footballer and was affiliated with a number of top UK clubs as a youngster.

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Cover design by Walker Books

Front cover photo © 2022 Cesar Antonis

Portrait of Leon Rolle by Double or Nothing Productions

Calligraphy by Kevin Rooi

**LET LEON'S STORY INSPIRE YOU  
TO EMBRACE LIFE AND FULFIL  
YOUR INCREDIBLE POTENTIAL**



Things weren't always easy for me growing up, and I made a lot of mistakes. But I don't regret any of it, because everything that's happened has made me Locksmith, and that makes me proud.

I want you to be proud of yourself too. You have the power to be great. Successes, mistakes and failures are all just a part of life.

**It's the journey that counts, because that's what makes you who you are.**

ISBN 978-1-5295-0062-2



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eBook  
available



**£9.99**  
UK ONLY