

It's History  
By Emily C.

ELIZABETH: Coddling mother of LINCOLN, in her mid-fifties, married to DAVID  
 DAVID: Strict and arrogant father of LINCOLN, in his mid-fifties, married to ELIZABETH  
 PRINCIPAL STEELE: supposedly unbiased principal, in his thirties\  
 LINCOLN: Passionate son of ELIZABETH and DAVID, in his teens

(LINCOLN walks into Principal Steele's office to see PRINCIPAL STEELE sitting at the large desk, staring at LINCOLN. DAVID and ELIZABETH are sitting on opposite sides of the desk, and a seat in between them is saved for LINCOLN. The office is a cold grey, with a calendar on the wall that marks March 2101 and the picture on the calendar has a baby robot on it that says, "Look into the future.")

LINCOLN

Good morning, Principal-- Mom? Dad? What are you doing here?!

ELIZABETH

Hi, Linky!

DAVID

Hello, son.

PRINCIPAL STEELE

I called them in today because I wanted to discuss something with all of you. Thank you, Mr. and Mrs. Swanson for joining us. Please, Lincoln, sit down.

(LINCOLN reluctantly sits down into the chair between ELIZABETH and DAVID and puts his backpack down).

LINCOLN

Uh, What did you even call me here for, anyway?

PRINCIPAL STEELE

Ah, yes. (PRINCIPAL STEELE brings out a small tablet from behind his desk with a video of LINCOLN on it.)

LINCOLN

Um... Principal Steele, what is that?

PRINCIPAL STEELE

This is a video we have collected of you talking to your wonderful animatronic teacher, #A109342. I sure am thankful for animatronic teachers!

(PRINCIPAL STEELE chuckles softly. ELIZABETH and DAVID look at the thumbnail on the screen. PRINCIPAL STEELE presses the “play” button. LINCOLN says in the video, “But what happened before Mars? What was life like?” A robotic voice responds, “DOES NOT COMPUTE! DOES NOT COMPUTE!” The video stops.)

PRINCIPAL STEELE (con’t)

As you can see, it appears to be that Lincoln has been asking his teacher about the concept of (PRINCIPAL STEELE takes a deep breath) history. As you all know, asking about what happened, um, before Mars is strictly prohibited by law. Anyone who tries to research what happened before life on Mars gets (PRINCIPAL STEELE sighs) the Inquirer tattoo.

LINCOLN

Oh my god... I...I didn’t know how you got the tattoo... Oh my god...

PRINCIPAL STEELE

Now, before we make assumptions about the consequences of the Inquirer mark, let me list them out for you.

(PRINCIPAL STEELE brings out a paper from his desk and clears his throat).

PRINCIPAL STEELE, cont.

“If one has the Inquirer tattoo, branded by the Marsian Government, they are forced to live with certain consequences, such as an 8-inch long tattoo that says ‘Inquirer’ on the left forearm. Also, when one has the “Inquirer” Mark, they are prohibited to work at certain occupations, such as educational facilities, occupations involving the field of astronomy, visual art, law, and journalism. If one is to... hide the Inquirer Mark, then they are sentenced to 10 years of prison.” Now, this probably seems like a lot of consequences, but there really is no need to worry. No one has the Inquirer mark...yet.

ELIZABETH

My little Linky... with the Inquirer mark... This isn’t fair!

DAVID

Darling, this is fair. Lincoln knows better than to ask such foolish questions.

ELIZABETH

You really think my son, our son, deserves the Inquirer mark? It has been his dream to be an astronaut since he was 5 years old!

LINCOLN

It... has?

DAVID

(Ignoring LINCOLN) He needs to learn.

ELIZABETH

But the Inquirer mark would ruin his life!

LINCOLN

But--

DAVID

It would only prevent him from getting certain jobs. He can still be a chef! An architect! An... uh...

LINCOLN

But guys--

ELIZABETH

David, honey, you see how they treat people with the mark on the street. You really want our son to be one of those people?

LINCOLN

I still don't--

DAVID

Lincoln's a smart young man. He'll be fine.

LINCOLN

I STILL DON'T UNDERSTAND WHY HISTORY IS BANNED HERE! You're always saying how "much you guys care about me and how much you love me", but you're just arguing about something I don't even fully understand!

DAVID

Lincoln Swanson! These questions are exactly the kind of questions that are going to get you into even more trouble!

PRINCIPAL STEELE

Lincoln, Lincoln, Lincoln. Please, no need to shout. Now let me explain. Your parents have experienced life on Earth. They know the horrible things that happened to us there. They were so horrible that when we moved here, our intent was to forget the entire history of Earth. The way we do this is by prohibiting the people who lived on Earth to tell any details to anyone about what happened there, so that future generations wouldn't know about Earth at all. The problem was--

DAVID

Alright, Steele! That's enough!

ELIZABETH

David! What are you doing? Let the man speak, for goodness sake!

DAVID

No! Lincoln already knows enough! The more he knows, the more of a chance that he will get the Inquirer mark and that he will ask even more questions!

PRINCIPAL STEELE

Please, Mr. Swanson, I assure you that--

LINCOLN

I'm sorry to interrupt your precious little conversation about my future, but I'm right here! You're talking about me as if I'm not in the room!

ELIZABETH

See, David?! You're making our son all stressed out!

DAVID

I'M making him stressed? I think the Principal standing in front of us is making him all stressed out!

LINCOLN

YOU'RE DOING IT AGAIN!

ELIZABETH

Oh, sweetie, I'm sorry.

ELIZABETH (con't)

(Whispering in LINCOLN's ear) You know, I don't even see why the Inquirer mark exists.

DAVID

What... What did I just hear?

ELIZABETH

(Ignoring DAVID, whispering into LINCOLN's ear) People should know about Earth, in my opinion. I believe in learning about the past. That's why I'm not mad that you asked that question, Link.

DAVID

Elizabeth Swanson! What did you just say? TELL ME NOW!

PRINCIPAL STEELE

Please stop--

ELIZABETH

(Quietly) I said... I said that I'm a ProPast and that I believe that Lincoln did nothing wrong.

DAVID

My wife... a ProPast... This... This is unacceptable! I can't believe this. For God's sake, you lived on Earth for a huge part of your life! You've seen the horrible things that they did to us, and you support that?! Unbelievable.

ELIZABETH

Dave, please...

DAVID

Don't "Dave please" me now, Elizabeth! History is something that we have put in the past and never to think about it again!

ELIZABETH

You really think we should teach our children not to learn from others mistakes?

DAVID

Listen. No one wants to hear what happened on that horrible, horrible planet. Keep your little memories to yourself from now on. Alright, "Darling"? (DAVID does air quotes around the word darling)

ELIZABETH

What on Mars is that supposed to mean? Am I not your darling?

DAVID

Keep arguing like this and you won't be.

LINCOLN

I can't believe this is happening. My parents are about to file a divorce (LINCOLN gestures to ELIZABETH and DAVID) for who knows what, I'm about to get the Inquirer mark for asking ONE question, and no one has even told me why history is banned! (LINCOLN storms out)

ELIZABETH

Linky! Come back! (ELIZABETH gets out of her chair and starts to exit)

PRINCIPAL STEELE

Mrs. Swanson! Please wait for a minute!

(ELIZABETH walks back to her chair).

PRINCIPAL STEELE

Let's let Lincoln calm down for a minute before we make him come back in. Sounds good?

ELIZABETH and DAVID (in unison)

(mumbling) Sounds good.

PRINCIPAL STEELE

Before we talk about the Inquirer Mark, I must ask you what you think is causing this... tension between you and your son.

ELIZABETH

What do you mean?

PRINCIPAL STEELE

Well... Typically, when a child's school life is being negatively affected it is possible that there is some sort of issue going on at home.

ELIZABETH

...well... we do fight a lot...and we do seem to disagree on a lot of things...

DAVID

Elizabeth, you know that our marriage has nothing to do with this. We love each other. We're fine.

PRINCIPAL STEELE

Look, I hate to intrude on personal relationships, but the issues with your marriage are obviously affecting Lincoln and his choices in life.

DAVID

Steele, our marriage is none of your business. Your business is to educate our son.

ELIZABETH

Honey, don't you see? Our constant fighting hasn't fixed anything. It has made Link want to break the law.

DAVID

Elizabeth, Lincoln knows that asking or learning about history is illegal. We didn't "cause" him to do anything.

ELIZABETH

History needs to be learned! It teaches lessons!

DAVID

People moved here to escape what happened on Earth! I came here to escape... to escape the loss of my sister. We all came here for different reasons, so we don't need you to go blabbering about the past.

ELIZABETH

Dave. Listen to me. If we teach people history, they will learn. They can learn from the horrible things their ancestors went through. Mars will won't be like another Earth. It could be... Paradise. We need to learn about the bad things to bring out the good in people. Don't you understand?

DAVID

Elizabeth Swanson, you know exactly why I left Earth. You know what happened to my sister. To my family. I can't just... talk about that as if nothing happened, Liz! Don't you understand? (DAVID holds the hand of ELIZABETH) I came here to start a new life. To forget and move on. To look into the future. I have to ask you one thing. Please stop expecting me to believe in sharing the history of Earth, ok? You know how much pain it causes me to think about that planet.

(Silence.)

ELIZABETH

...Ok.

PRINCIPAL STEELE

I'm glad that you guys were able to compromise! Not only have you benefited your own lives by talking to each other like that, but you also benefited Lincoln's life. Speaking of Lincoln, why don't we call him back in now?

(All of a sudden, LINCOLN bursts into the room.)

LINCOLN

Mom! Dad! Please don't divorce. This was all my fault. ELIZABETH Honey, this wasn't your fault. You were curious. It's ok to be curious.

LINCOLN

Mom... that's not what I'm apologizing for. I'm apologizing for this.

(LINCOLN pulls a large history book out of his backpack. DAVID stands up)

DAVID

Hand it over. NOW. I SAID NOW!

LINCOLN

Okay, I will, but before I do, let me tell you something. Excuse me, Mr. Steele, did you ever try to learn about history?

PRINCIPAL STEELE

What? No! How dare you accuse your principal of breaking the law! I wasn't born there, so I intend to know nothing about the planet. Plus, If I did learn about history, I couldn't work here.

LINCOLN

It's actually pretty interesting. Sad, but interesting.

DAVID

Where did you get this?

LINCOLN

I...um...I bought it with my allowance money at an underground bookstore.

(DAVID starts to rip up the book.)

LINCOLN (con't.)

Dad! Stop! Dad!

DAVID

I don't...I don't want you to be hurt by what you read in this book.

LINCOLN

Dad, I already read through it and I'm fine. In fact, I feel like I've learned so much more about our society.

PRINCIPAL STEELE

Lincoln, I'm sorry to say this, but because of this history book, you are forced to have the Marsian Inquirer Mark. You will be branded with it tomorrow at the Marsian Inquiring Facility

with an unexcused absence from school. Once you have the Inquirer Mark, you are prohibited to take classes such as AP Journalism, AP Astronomy, and art.

ELIZABETH (crying)  
Lincoln! (ELIZABETH sniffles) why?

LINCOLN  
I was curious, mom! You guys are always arguing about it!

(ELIZABETH and DAVID look at each other with guilt.)

LINCOLN (con't)  
I don't understand why it was banned. I learned so much from that book. About history, about life, about people! And Mars bans this? It doesn't make any sense!

DAVID  
We are very disappointed in you, Lincoln. Buying a history book from an underground bookstore? That is horrible! Your punishment is no allowance for 6 months.

ELIZABETH  
Honey, he already is getting a punishment! You really think he deserves another one?

DAVID  
Don't start with me, Elizabeth...

PRINCIPAL STEELE  
I think you guys need some time to figure out the future. Because you know the Mars motto,

PRINCIPAL STEELE, DAVID, ELIZABETH and LINCOLN (in unison)  
Look into the future.

DAVID  
We would like to discuss this at home, (DAVID glares at LINCOLN) Principal Steele, if that is alright.

PRINCIPAL STEELE  
That is perfectly fine. This meeting is dismissed.

(ELIZABETH, DAVID, and LINCOLN exit. PRINCIPAL STEELE is sitting alone in the room, rubbing his left arm. He pulls up the sleeve, and there is a large tattoo on it that says “Inquirer” on it.)

PRINCIPAL STEELE

Please, Lincoln, just follow the rules. Don’t end up like me.

END