

January 8, 2020

Dear Shannon Messenger,

Every life is fraught with adventure and pain, highs and lows, celebrations and missteps. No life exemplifies this as well as Sophie Foster's. She was plucked from the world that she knew and had everything turned on its head. At the age of five, when she was still just trying to learn simple concepts of the human world, it all tipped over. She was forced to face the fact that she was entirely different from the people around her. She was a foreigner, living among creatures who couldn't *wouldn't*, accept her.

She always felt like an outsider, flying in a world of people who were still learning to crawl. Now, I'm certainly not saying that I'm a child-prodigy like Sophie Foster, but I can say that I've related to her feelings before.

My entire life, I've thought differently than any of my friends. They are constantly involved in sports and academic competitions, and until eighth grade, I did none of that. They were quite literally racing laps around me, while I struggled to keep my feet from stumbling over one another.

Then I found what had been missing. My identity is dependent on the well-being of my community. This can be said for anyone, but I can feel it coursing through my veins whereas many people can't. This is how Sophie lives. Whether she knows it or not, Sophie Foster works so hard to help her world, because she can sense the pieces crumbling, and refuses to let that happen because it would break her too.

The first time I read *Keeper of the Lost Cities: Everblaze*, I was an eighth grader who was finally feeling accomplished. I was a writer for my school newspaper, I had joined an athletic team for the first time in my life (basketball), and I was participating in a district reading competition called Battle of the Books. Things were finally coming together.

During my free time, I showered myself in the ink of books. *Everblaze* was a prime example of me diving into an unknown world for an adventure. I came to learn about myself and my values along the way. I felt Grady's words pour into my heart the minute my eyes read them. "I've realized now that our world doesn't define us. We define our world." Finally, a statement that I resonated with.

I've always been one of those people that journeys to discover new quotes but never had one felt so... *right*. Someone else truly understood why I took the time to care about my community so much. I care because my actions determine my character. If no one cared about the community, then there may be no community. I must work to show people the importance of caring for our world.

When I see litter, I pick it up and throw it away. When I have free time in the summer, I volunteer my time as a docent at a local museum. I bike around town and I attend local farmers' markets. I bask in the world around me, knowing that I help to keep it together as Sophie works to keep hers together. I only truly realized this when I read your book.

"We define our world."

I want to make the world a positive network of peace, of love, of trust, of connectivity. I look to Sophie for guidance. We both battle against the divide that people see in the world. We both challenge the norms. We both work to create the strongest, best world that we can.

Without your book, it may never have become clear to me why I feel so strongly about my town, my state, and the Earth as a whole. I may never have understood the importance of my actions in the bigger picture.

I look to the future, with characters like Sophie Foster holding my hand and helping guide me through my decisions. Wisdom from characters like Grady, Lady Cadence, and Elwin will forge my path ahead. I will listen. I will learn. And I will adapt.

I will help my world to grow and thrive, creating connections and positivity.

We will get through everything together because no one is alone.

We build our world.

We build our communities.

We build our families.

We can create what we wish to see in our lives, and that is exactly what I intend to do.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, reading "Parker Zoe Jackson". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style with a large initial "P".

Parker Zoe Jackson