

Dear Reader,

This book is a love letter to the young, the struggling, and the lonely. It's a story about starting over. It's about longing for your life to go back to normal. Feeling scared or uncertain about the future. Feeling far away from your friends. Carrying pain. And learning to live with and recover from trauma.

When I set out to write this book, I often wondered if I was the right person to do this. I wondered if I was skilled enough to create this quiet, emotionally driven plot. I worried that the story might be too sad. I worried that it might not be sad enough. I worried that the stakes would feel too low, or that Maisie's journey would seem too slow. I worried that not enough kids would relate to her loneliness. And, of course, I worried that too *many* kids might understand how she's feeling.

As I crafted this story, I was unsure of every page. But I still finished the book.

Then something unprecedented happened.

As I write this letter, the global COVID-19 pandemic has forced millions of people into isolation. I haven't left my house in ten days. Each day, I grapple with my own loneliness and despair for

the world. For the families who have lost loved ones. For the kids who feel far away from their friends. For this collective generation of people, who must learn to live with and recover from this mass trauma.

These are uncertain times. I have no idea how different the world will be by the time Maisie's story is released. I have no idea how heavy our hearts will be.

All I know for sure is this: I'm not worried about this book anymore. Because at the end of the day, it's just a book. There isn't enough space in my head or my heart to worry about these words, when so many lives and livelihoods are at stake. I've made my peace with the reality that my work is "nonessential" in our society.

Nevertheless, I hope that this love letter will find its way to those who are looking for it. And I can only hope that it helps. Because that's all I really set out to do with this book.

In some small way, I wanted to help.

Sincerely,  
Christine Day