

AWAKE

Dear Friend,

For as long as I have had memory, I have loved creatures. Growing up, I constantly tried to convince my parents to get me a pet of any kind. I put a stuffed pink mouse in a box for a week and fed it rainbow nerds to demonstrate my excellent creature-care abilities. And I even took an entomology class at the local community college, where we made little bug cages out of petri dishes, plaster, and screens. “Ewe, bugs!” was never really a thing for me. My little sister would run screaming at the hint of spindly legs. I have always had an open mind about such things. And have rescued many a creature from certain death using glass and a postcard.

A couple of years ago, just before I began writing **AWAKE**, there was “a lot” happening in the world. And because of “a lot,” there were many people who were being treated and regarded horribly, simply because they came from a different place than other folks.

They were the “other.” Which was something to fear.

A notion that broke my heart.

Around the same time, I read a poem by Nikki Giovanni called “The Allowables.” In it, the narrator admits to killing a spider just out of fear.



AWAKE is a book about coming face-to-face with otherness. It’s about encouraging taking a pause, especially when fear strikes. And about waking to the idea that something that might seem scary initially could actually have a story of its own.

If we could just look a little closer at this “other,” and realize they it is just a creature, going about its creature business, and not too dissimilar from us in many ways, we might learn to accept it. And even become friends.

Mr. Rogers said, “Frankly, there isn’t anyone you couldn’t learn to love once you’ve heard their story.”

And I say, why not a spider?

With love and gentle affection for the many-legged, and the others,

Mags DeRoma

