

Erin Price
1220 North Main Street
Hendersonville, NC 28792

Dear Rebecca Stead,

Your book, When You Reach Me, seemed to capture life perfectly through the eyes of a twelve-year-old girl. The connection I made with Miranda was a surprising one. After all, I'm from the small town of Hendersonville, hidden in the mountains of North Carolina while Miranda lives in New York, 23 years before I was even born. As I read your book again and again, Miranda's experiences seemed to travel through time and become my own. As Miranda discovered herself, I recognized a part of me I had never noticed before.

I first saw a new part of me through Miranda's eyes when she said "Sometimes you never feel meaner than the moment you stop being mean. It's like how turning on a light makes you realize how dark the room had gotten. And the way you usually act, the things you would have normally done, are like these ghosts that everyone can see but pretends not to." I started to understand that behind the curtain of smiling, conversation, sports, and friends I am in the dark. I've been scrambling around, grabbing hold of any sense of control and organization I can find. And it made me think, even if I were to find this "light," would I have the courage to turn it on. Am I willing to give up this half-truth reality I have created? It's so much easier to just blindly imagine the world in little sections, stereotypes. *He's weird, stay AWAY from him. She obviously doesn't even care about the world around her, so why should I help her?* You helped me realize that I separated myself from the people I disdained, in fear that I would be judged as one of them as well.

It's surprising how much a person can pretend not to notice. I've seen the ways boys jeer and tease someone in gym. I've heard the girls' whispers and giggles behind turned backs, sometimes even been part of them. I wasn't the person who taunted and laughed at someone until they cried. But I also wasn't the person who came over to see if I could help them, or went to a teacher to tell them what had happened. I saw it as someone else's problem. It was better for me to just not get involved. Just like Miranda, I realized that

“I wasn't one of the girls who tortured her on purpose but I had never lifted a finger to help her before, or even spent one minute being nice to her.” You helped me find the parts of my life I had chosen not to notice, my “darkness”.

When You Reach Me showed me the light I was missing. Your book has inspired me to move past the stereotypes I've shoved people into and look around to see how I can help the Alice Evanses of my world. I will never forget what you and Miranda have taught me.

With Gratitude,
Erin Gray Price
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