Gracie Deery
Burlington IA, Notre Dame Junior High

Dear Ms. Penn,

Your children's book The Kissing Hand is my favorite book in the world. Your book's wonderful brilliance and magic has helped over come the biggest obstacle in my life.

I was four when my mother died of T-cell-non-Hodgkins lymphoma, a cancer that affects all the major organs. I turned five the next day. My Aunt and I bought The Kissing Hand. while my mother was in month-and-a-half-long coma. Your book helped me understand my mother's condition and death. I was going to an unknown world without my mother. And my mother went to an unknown world without me and my family. I still remember how my Aunt Colette would read to my mother and me your book. Sometimes I would sneak a kiss on her hand, I knew I could get in trouble for it but I did it because I wanted her to feel my love. But let me tell you something, it's not just when you receive a kiss you feel the warmth of love, it's also when you give.

Your illustrations have also sparked my attention as well. I love art, I love observing it. I've always observed pictures and landscapes for as long as I can remember. The one thing I've always observed on a human or animal is their eyes. To see if the artist added the mood or just left them there. Chester and Mrs. Raccoon always have sparked and mood eyes. You can see how sad Chester is about leaving his mother through his eyes. This is another way that makes your book special to me.

At Chester's school a variety of animals come to learn. This makes me so hopeful of peace in our world today. Why can't all the different people of the world come together as a group to learn? At Chester's school there's no violence, you can tell! You don't see the other animals trying to hurt one another do you? No, you don't. You see Chester and his new friends he is going to meet. If we all come to our senses and realize that God sent all of us to school to do the same things: make new friends, help each other, and discover new things together. Maybe we all need a "Kissing Hand" from God. Or do we all ready have one?

My Aunt Colette, who bought me your book, is now terminally ill with cancer. It started with breast cancer and after a long, hard, exhausting struggle she beat it. Then it came back a lot worse, the doctors said three months. She has lived for year, but then was told last month six months. I hope she will out live their predictions again, from the bottom of my heart I hope she does. But the next time I visit her I'm going to read your book to her. After I read it to her I'm going to take her hand and unfold into a fan and kiss her palm. Then we will both feel the flow of love in us.

Love,

Gracie

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