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Dear Mrs. Blackman,

Love much like hate is hard to hide. Love between friends or a couple is seen by everyone but so is hate between enemies. Hate in this world happens for many reasons, like racial profiling, old grudges between former friends, or even within a family, but when love forms between people who are meant to hate, chaos can break out.

I became your characters when reading your book *Naughts and Crosses*. Callum, white and poor in a school full of black, well-off kids, is very similar to me. I go to a predominately white school and being  $\frac{1}{4}$  Chinese makes me unlike everybody else. I am also rather outspoken. Due to my being different, I went through a great deal of verbal abuse last school year, much like Callum did when he went to the new school. The other students verbally and physically abused Callum. I was called names and punched at recess and mocked and mimicked during class time. He talked to his parents about the situation. I did the same thing. My parents went to the teachers and the counselor to discuss the situation. When the other students started to harass Callum, only one teacher helped him with his problem. Last year when I was being verbally harassed, the guidance counselor told me that the reason I was being treated badly was because of something I was doing, though she would not tell me or my parents what I was doing wrong. Eventually, I found out I was doing nothing wrong. I did not feel support from the teachers at school either. While all of this was going on, returning to school every day was not fun. I even asked my parents to home school me so I would not have to put up with the bullies any more. This book made me realize that I am not the only person who has gone through this kind of abuse.

I also saw myself in Sephy when she and Callum met when they weren't allowed to. I, too, hid a boyfriend from my parents. My parents had told me I was just too young to date. Though we met in public places like social events and at friends' parties, Sephy and Callum always met in private. Sephy also didn't just hide Callum from her parents like I did, but from everyone else as well. Sephy and Callum, much like my boyfriend and me, were friends before they started going out. Unlike my parents, who came to accept my boyfriend, Sephy's parents never accepted Callum even after Sephy gave birth to his child after his death. I realize how lucky I am because my parents have accepted my boyfriend. Life was a lot harder for Callum and Sephy. It would be very hard to have to live with the disapproval of society and your parent in order to keep seeing the person you love.

Much like the popular kids and the outcasts in my school, the Crosses and the Naughts were the have and have-nots. I believe that the status of the kids in my school is lowered if the popular kid goes out with or even talks to one of the outcasts. Their popular click doesn't approve of that kind of behavior and might even drop them out of the group. This is a lot like Sephy being looked down upon by her "friends" since she was a "Blanker lover" (72). They called Sephy a blanker lover as she hung out with white kids.

The Crosses call them blankers, as they are white, blank in color, blank in thoughts. The Naughts were always looked down upon since they didn't have any color or money. I, being partially oriental and considered an outcast in my school, feel I am a Naught in a world full of Crosses. The book showed me that you can get by without being part of the right group. It is more important to be who you are than to act the way you are expected to by other people in order to fit in with the popular groups.

Your book not only related to my life but it opened my eyes to some effects of hatred. Since reading your book, I now see that my life is lived like a Naught. Being different can be good though since doing something that your type isn't supposed to, can change how your whole group acts. Getting good grades and having long relationships with friends is something that a Naught is not supposed to achieve. I am achieving both of these things. I want to be an example for both the Naughts and Crosses by crossing the barriers between them.

Sincerely,  
Kelly Skinner

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